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BEIJING YOUTH DAILY



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Upgrading their wheels

The city's disabled residents have reason to be excited this month. A change in municipal driving regulations is permitting citizens with partial or total disability of the lower limbs to operate automatic cars that have been modified to be accessible.

But even if new drivers pass their classes at the two driving schools willing to accept them, they may be disappointed to discover how much of the city remains inaccessible: Beijing has a paltry 90 handicapped parking spaces, most of which circle the Olympic venues.

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City announces 56 measures to ease traffic tension

By Chu Meng

The municipal government will roll out 56 measures to relieve the city's serious traffic congestion within the year, senior government transportation administrators said at a press conference.

Those measures include a new multi-billion-yuan traffic fund, a two-year extension of the system that limits downtown access by license plate number, new rail construction and efforts to codify parking policies.

"The goal is to stop traffic congestion from getting worse. But it is hard, since the number of cars on Beijing's roads is surging," said Guan Hongzhi, professor at the

Transportation Research Center of Beijing University of Technology.

The 550,000 new vehicles added to the capital's roads this year bring the city's total to 4.2 million.

At this rate, traffic conditions may continue to deteriorate to their chaotic pre-Olympic level last seen in 2007, Guan said.

Authorities at the press conference said the multi-billion-yuan fund will be used to build new underground circuit roads in densely populated areas like Zhongguancun and the World Trade Center and to expand major arteries above ground.

Zhongguancun, the city's information technology hub, has had one underground

circuit road for more than two years. It allows up to 5,000 vehicles to loop around the heavily populated area.

"The municipal government found the special fund necessary to deal with traffic congestion in the capital. More details will be released as plans develop," Wang Zhaorong, a senior official at the Municipal Commission of Transport, said at the press conference.

The government confirmed it will continue until 2010 its policy of restricting cars from being on the road depending on the ending digit of their license plates. The policy bans Beijing's 5.8 million drivers from driving one workday each week to reduce traffic

congestion by 7 percent, authorities said.

However, no policies restrict citizens from buying a second car.

"Though the current system of limitations may not be thoroughly developed, it is easily enforced. It will work until there is a better transportation network, and it remains a good way to ease traffic," said Shi Qixin, the previous director of Tsinghua University's Transportation Research Center.

"Nowadays, cars are quite common. Anyone who can afford one and needs one buys one. Relatively speaking, Beijing is a great consumer environment [for cars] and has maintained steady and open policies [for ownership]," Shi said.

Officials call on developers to build quality, not crap

By Zhao Hongyi

Officials are speaking out against construction waste and the soaring price of housing all over the country.

Qiu Baoxing, vice minister for housing and urban-rural development, openly criticized the poor quality and short life span of new constructions at the 6th International Conference on Green Buildings and Energy-saving Technologies held in Beijing over the weekend.

"The average life span of a building in the US is 74 years; in the UK it is 132 years; in China, the life span is 35 years," Qiu said.

The country has seen a major boom in residential construction the past decade, with 2 billion square meters of new buildings finished each year.

However, that rate of development is eating up half the world's output of steel and cement. The result is a catastrophic waste of resources, even when excluding the waste created by demolition.

Every new 10,000 square meters of real estate built leaves behind 500 to 600 tons of waste: demolition of 10,000 square meters of old real estate produces another 7,000 to 12,000 tons. Construction alone accounts for 30 to 40 percent of all urban waste.

The quality of the new buildings is even more worrying.

In June, a 13-story residential building in the Lotus Compound of Shanghai collapsed because the developers ignored building codes. A worker was killed in the collapse.

In October, another six-story residential building collapsed in Wuhan, Hubei Province. Investigators determined its foundation was not adequate. A month later, another building collapsed in Nanjing, Jiangsu Province.

Zhang Yuan, assistant professor of construction at South China University of Technology, blames the miserable quality on "ignorance."

But Chen Yiming, director for energy saving and science from the ministry, said there are more sinister causes.

Several investigations discovered that local governments are reselling land rights within a few years of each new construction to boost their profits. Corruption and failure to honor their responsibilities have severely damaged the reputation of many local



Rapid reconstruction shortens the life span of many buildings. With such short life spans, quality is rarely a concern for developers.

CFP Photo

governments.

In Yangzhou, Jiangsu Province, one residential compound only six years old was nearly demolished by new developers, because the local government resold the land.

Many cities are being redesigned and rebuilt whenever government power changes hands. Some officials consider it a shortcut to boosting GDP, and consequently, many residential communities, central business districts and other compounds are built and rebuilt year after year.

"All this leaves behind incredible waste and cripples the life span of new constructions," the vice minister said.

Property prices continue to soar, especially in big cities. In Beijing, the cost of a new condo within Fifth Ring Road passed the 50,000 yuan per square meter mark, causing many buyers to pull out.

"We are faced with two challenges: how to make developers build quality buildings with less waste and how to reign in the price of owning a home," Qiu said.

Tongzhou to ease downtown population, industry pressure

By Liang Meilan

The municipal government is eyeing Tongzhou District, east of the central business district, as the next overflow site for population and industry.

Statistics released at the Beijing Tongzhou Modern International New City Construction Project Releasing and Global Business Invitation show that Tongzhou will have a population capacity of at least 1 million or more people in its 155 square kilometers after redevelopment.

"As Beijing moves into its next phase of urbanization, there will be a new flood of people into the city. One of the greatest challenges ahead is how to reign in overpopulation," said Chen Gang, vice mayor of Beijing. "The city receives 500,000 new permanent residents every three years - the population of most mid-sized cities."

This year, the major task will be the Canal-centric Promoter Area, dubbed the "New CBD."

More than 140 leading domestic enterprises and Fortune 500 corporations made bids at the invitation conference. Several bidders were real estate agents and investment firms.

"The bidding on 14 lots in this core area is by no means a simple real estate trade. It will be a scientifically planned cluster of residential and business buildings with multiple functions and collocation facilities for education, medical care, public traffic and commercial services. The construction of a purely residential area is prohibited," Chen said.

The district government is giving priority to the construction of public facilities. Several new hospitals and schools will be completed by next year, Yue Peng, deputy district chief of Tongzhou, said.

Unlike conventional city planning, which stresses automobile access, the Canal-centric Promoter Area will prioritize pedestrian and public traffic, followed by bicycle traffic. Car access will be a distant third according to blueprints by the Municipal Commission of Urban Planning.

"We came up with plan to expand the transportation system and the underground building area to use of underground space," said Shi Weiliang, chief engineer responsible for the new construction.

Licenses open to the disabled, but accessibility still a dream

By Chu Meng

New regulations that took effect April 1 are giving the city's disabled residents their first chance behind the wheel.

More than 150 Beijingers who are paralyzed from the waist down have registered for driving school, but they may be disappointed to learn just how much of the city remains inaccessible to the disabled.



Few driving schools are open to disabled people. Only two in the capital are accepting applicants with partial or total paralysis of the lower limbs.

Free to drive

The revised Regulations on Application and Use of Driver's Licenses published March 31 relaxed, for the first time, restrictions on the physical condition of license applicants, the Ministry of Public Security said.

Citizens able to sit on their own despite a paralysis of the lower limbs can apply for a license to operate a five-seat automatic car that has been refitted with devices to make it accessible to disabled persons.

"I push the stick to brake and pull to accelerate. It's easy for me to use," said Yang Jianzhong, a man paralyzed from the waist down in a traffic accident eight years ago.

Yang is studying for his license at the Feng Shun Driving School, but he has been driving already for six years. "I have been driving a car exclusively adapted for me since 2004, without a license. Once I finish three months of classes, I will be allowed to drive legally," Yang said.

The customization changes the normally foot-operated accelerator and brake pedals into a hand-operated control stick attached to the right side of the steering wheel. The device allows the driver to accelerate and brake with only the right hand.

Beijing Mei Bei Li Hand Driving Device is the only company licensed by the municipal government to refit an automatic car for a disabled driver. The conversion costs 3,000 yuan and can be performed on any automatic car within hours.

"Equal rights and treatment for the disabled is the yardstick of modern civilization. The new regulations can be seen as a symbol of the municipal government's goal to reshape Beijing as a 'World City,'" said Kou Zhengming, spokesman for the Beijing Disabled People's Federation.

"For those dreaming of greater freedom and mobility, the new rules will give them a chance to dramatically expand their world in vehicles much safer than three-wheeled motorbikes," Kou said.

Schools still off-limits

Oriental Fashion Driving School has refit 10 of its cars to be disabled-accessible and



New students must pass an eyesight test before enrolling.

CFP Photos

has trained 16 coaches to teach with the cars. It also overhauled its facilities to make everything wheelchair-accessible, said Wang Zhi-zhong, the school's training director.

But of the capital's 109 driving schools, only Feng Shun Driving School and Oriental Fashion Driving School are accepting disabled applicants.

A staff member surnamed Guo at Haidian Driving School said the company has not had time to refit its cars and retrain coaches.

Zhao Dayong, a coach at the school, blamed existing enrollment.

"The school is already very busy with current trainees. The Beijing Traffic Management Bureau made us raise the fees for ordinary students by 10 percent on April 1, but disabled students are still paying the same," Zhao said.

"More importantly, it takes a lot more time to work with a disabled trainee. Some have a tough time learning to get in and out of the car or turning to check their blind spots," he said.

The only schools accepting disabled students are in the far southwest, but commute times of three hours or more may make many hesitant to enroll, Kou said.

City ill prepared

Beijing Gonglian Shunda Intellectual Traffic System Management manages most roadside and ground-level parking lots in the capital. Statistics published on its website

showed that, as of June 2008, the city had only 90 handicapped parking spots spread over 39 major streets — most of them around the Olympic stadiums.

The website said there was one such parking space near Panjiayuan Supermarket and two in Zhongguancun, near Peking University. The wheelchair symbols are painted onto the ground, and no signposts call attention to the spots.

"That is far from enough," said Guan Hongzhi, a professor at the Transportation Research Center of Beijing University of Technology.

"International rules call for 10 percent of all parking spaces to be reserved for disabled drivers. Even then it doesn't matter, because we have no laws to penalize ordinary drivers for taking those spots. In the US or Canada, anyone who parks in a disabled person's parking spot without a permit will be fined 700 to 2,100 yuan," Guan said.

Underground parking is even rarer. Only two or three such spaces can be found in most official buildings and shopping malls.

"The situation in Beijing is far from satisfactory. It is even worse in other cities. Our country has 5 million people who are paralyzed in one or more limb. If even one in 100 of them applied for a license, we would need 50,000 parking spots," Guan said.

Finding a company to convert their automatic cars will be another problem.

"The Standardization Administration released its specifications for how to convert cars for disabled drivers back in 2007. As of this year, Beijing Mei Bei Li Hand Driving Device Company is still the only one company in the city licensed to refit cars," said Luo Yimin, director of Beijing Assistance Device Center for Disabled Person.

"If only one company can do it, that's called a monopoly. What if my car breaks down after being refitted? Will Mei Bei Li have enough crew members to come rescue me and handle the repairs? Can the gas stations, which have all gone self-service, offer us help when we need it?" Yang said.

The answer to most of those questions is probably "No."

KFC sued for chickening out on coupons

By Han Manman

Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) is in hot water again, this time for refusing to honor its online coupons Tuesday.

After being turned away all day, angry customers laid siege to the KFC in China World Tower Tuesday evening hurling chairs, turning over tables and refusing to leave when staff said the promotion was halted due to "fake coupons."

KFC staff phoned the police to seek help in breaking up the mob.

One Beijing resident filed suit against the food giant in a local court Wednesday.

Customers around the country were furious about the botched promotion. The KFC website had promised to sell a Family Bucket of chicken marked down from 64 to 32 yuan to anyone who printed out the coupon.

But most customers soon found the restaurant refused to honor its coupons.

KFC restaurants in other major cities — Shanghai, Guangzhou, Tianjin and Suzhou — were also swarmed by angry customers.

In Nanjing, several KFC branches were forced to temporarily close after disappointed customers returned to demand "satisfaction."

KFC China said Wednesday that many fake coupons circulated online forcing the company to cancel its promotion.

"KFC has reported the case to local police and we will cooperate with investigators," the statement said. "KFC is sorry for the disturbance. If consumers insist that their coupons are from official sources, they will be required to show evidence."

The company did not specify what evidence would be considered sufficient.

KFC's explanation failed to satisfy many customers. Some said that despite the apology they remained angry about how they were treated.

"It's not about saving 32 yuan, it's about the credibility of a business. If KFC was not prepared to honor its own coupons, then it should not have offered them so recklessly. They are treating people as fools," said Chen Zheng, one of the angry customers left waiting at a Beijing KFC branch Tuesday.

"I felt deceived," Cheng said. He said he is waiting for KFC's explanation. "Even if the promotion would have caused it to lose money, KFC should give us a better answer and not cheat its costumers," he said.

"KFC's promotion plan had problems," said Beijing lawyer Qiu Baochang, chairman of the Consumer Protection Professional Commission under the Beijing Lawyers Association. The company never planned any mechanism to tell the difference between coupons downloaded from KFC's website and those downloaded from other websites.

"The way KFC treated its customers was injudicious," Qiu said, adding that the discovery of fake coupons alone should not have ended the promotion. The proper action would have been to continue the promotion while investigating who was responsible for the fakes, he said.

The country has no laws governing coupons obtained from the Internet, and there is also no related department to supervise Internet promotions, he said.

KFC's mistake should be a reminder that the government needs to update the way it protects consumer's rights in the digital age, he said.

Virtual cemeteries struggle to profit despite green push

By Li Zhixin

In past generations, filial youth made a pilgrimage out to the cemetery each Tomb Sweeping Day to honor their ancestors.

These days, when anything and everything can go digital, children are going online to honor the dead. While virtual cemeteries have been touted as convenient, low-cost and low-carbon ways to be filial, few pioneers in the field are turning a profit.



Virtual cemeteries are being pitched as a green alternative. CFP Photos

Buying virtual plots

Chen Ying, 36, used to go back to Nanjing each year in early April to honor his grandparents. But that changed two years ago when he created one of the Web's first sites offering virtual cemetery services.

"I was deeply influenced by traditional customs as a child," he said. "Each Tomb Sweeping Day, I always asked for leave to go back to my hometown and pay my respects to my grandparents at their tombs," he said.

Chen has been working in Beijing for 15 years since he finished school: the first 13 years he went home each year.

For decades, Tomb Sweeping Day went largely neglected due to the difficulty in arranging time off for a trip home. However, that changed in 2008 when the central government cancelled the May Golden Week in favor of short breaks based around traditional holidays.

Interest in remembering the dead has increased greatly since Tomb Sweeping Day became a legal holiday.

"More and more people have started to look back to their traditional values and return home to honor their deceased relatives during the three-day-long holiday. So many people are now filling the railway stations and cemeteries that the trip has become exhausting," Chen said.

His solution was tianlu.com, online tomb sweeping to help people stay filial without having to leave their desk.

"For people who can't go back to their hometowns but who still want to mourn and remember the departed, the site offers a great way to express their best wishes," he said.

Others are choosing the site as a green alternative to the traditional paper burning.

Duan Zhongfu, 29, a Beijing-born postgraduate student at Tsinghua University, spent 10 yuan to erect a virtual tomb for his mother on 1000soul.com, which was opened three days before this year's Tomb Sweeping Day by China's Funeral and Interment Association.

Using the website, he located the cemetery where his mother is buried. He purchased a virtual gravestone using virtual copper coins, which cost 1 yuan for every 10 coins. After that, he offered virtual flowers, lit virtual candles, burned virtual incense to pay his respects.

He also posted memorable stories about his mother along with many pictures.

"The online tombs are like mini-blogs. It's a very modern and low-carbon way to celebrate the traditional festival, and it's suitable for young people whose work pressures keep them from returning home," he said.



Some users have said the virtual memorials function more like a computer game.

New but unprofitable

Websites that offer cemetery services have developed fast since the Ministry of Civil Affairs began pushing to digitize tombs online in 2004. More than 50 websites offer cemetery services, but few profit.

Most online tombs are free or charge little. On Chen's tianlu.com, users can set up a tomb for free, but must pay 1 yuan or less to present virtual flowers or incense to the dead. "Construction and promotion of my website is simple, so I only have to turn enough money to keep it running," Chen said. He recently invested another 30,000 yuan into his website.

Lifall.com, a Hangzhou-based competitor, charges 240 yuan to set up an exquisitely designed permanent virtual memorial hall. However, it also faces operating pressure. "The company hasn't made a profit since it started in 2006 because the users are limited," said Xu Tu, its spokesman.

"Charging little to nothing does not guarantee the health of a website, but by the same token high fees will just make users apathetic. It is really a dilemma."

Netizens are accustomed to free services, and many people think online tomb services should be a free public utility. Those factors combined make them wary of any virtual cemetery that charges for its services, he said.

Many young users view the virtual tombs and memorial halls as computer games. "The vivid and beautiful designs of the tombs and memorial halls may attract many young visitors. They can arrange and decorate the tombs however they like. However, once their curiosity passes they will abandon the site," Xu said.

"Charging little to nothing does not guarantee the health of a website, but by the same token high fees will just make users apathetic," he said. "It is really a dilemma."

The sites also have a hard time making money because they lack advertisers.

"Due to limited visitor volume, few companies would choose to advertise with a virtual cemetery," he said. "Everything rides on the users."

Hopeful future

Online tombs have been controversial from the start. According to a survey by baidu.com, only 47 percent of respondents said they would consider going virtual for Tomb Sweeping Day.

"It is difficult for me to accept an online memorial as a replacement. This holiday is supposed to be something formal. Clicking a mouse is hardly an adequate replacement for visiting their tombs and bowing to their pictures," Liu Yingying, a teacher, said.

"A lot of these tombs look like a computer game, and I really don't think that's appropriate for a solemn memorial."

But her husband Duan Zhongfu, the 1000soul.com's user, disagreed.

"Every Tomb Sweeping Day, public transportation, traffic police and firefighters face a big challenge. All the

people going back to their hometowns cause heavy traffic. Stampedes and major fires are common place in cemeteries," he said.

"I am sick of tomb-sweeping activities because of the crowds, the traffic and the nasty smell of burnt ash in the air. The virtual tombs are worth considering."

"A lot of these tombs look like a computer game, and I really don't think that's appropriate for a solemn memorial."

Chen said the industry lacks supervision. There are no specific laws to standardize the fees and management of such websites. "Many of them follow the same pattern

and lack unique characteristics," Chen said.

"Some users are worried about what will happen to their memorials if the websites run into financial or legal problems. Without any guarantees in place, a lot of people are reluctant to buy into this service," he said.

But folklore experts said online tombs still have promise.

"Green interment is popular in many countries. Online worship can avoid a waste of natural and social resources and provide people with a convenient way to commemorate the dead," said Gao Wei, general secretary of the Beijing Folklore Association.

"With the government's encouragement and young people's gradual acceptance of this low-carbon way to pay their respects to the dead, it could one day be a very profitable market."

Miracle rescue

With hope dwindling, 115 miners saved

The impossible happened at Wangjialing Coal Mine, Shanxi Province on Monday: 115 of 153 miners were rescued nearly 200 hours after an accident trapped them underground.

The good news was also a boost for the government's coal industrial consolidation programs, which aim to impose tighter safety controls over the sector.



Rescuers continue the harrowing search for survivors at Wangjialing Coal Mine.

Xinhua Photo

Workers talk about rescue

The moment a mass of miners' cap lamps flicked on in front of him, Meng Quanfu burst into tears. He knew he was a part of a miracle: eight days after a mine shaft was flooded, trapping more than a hundred workers, there were signs of life.

Rescuers like Meng knew it was the miners' perseverance, wit and optimism, along with unshakeable confidence in their rescuers, that carried them through the dark days.

Noah's Arks

Wang Kai, head of one of the rescue teams, was dumbfounded when a member pointed to lamplight coming from the other end of the V-shaped shaft at around 10:20 pm last Sunday. "They took the hint and shook their lamps, as a sort of signal," Wang said.

The bottom of the shaft emerged as the water level fell, and Wang's team steadily approached the light's source.

To their astonishment, two mining cars were floating on the water. Inside were nine people who had been inside for a couple of days. Due to the tight space, the men had no choice but to squat in their version of Noah's Ark, wearing safety helmets.

The gushing waters, which erupted from an abandoned shaft on March 28, washed away one of the miners. He avoided drowning by tying his belt to a protrusion in the cave. He was floating in the water for 72 hours before he spotted the two mining cars and climbed inside immediately.

The nine men became the first group of survivors pulled out of the shaft that midnight.

The 106 workers who were saved 13 hours later opted for another plan.

Under the guidance of a senior miner, they dug open an abandoned tunnel and crept to higher ground which became their refuge from the torrential waters.

Food for the soul

Some of the trapped miners ate the bark of pine wood and drank the murky water underground to survive, Meng said. "Some of them ate the wrapping

bags of glucose, along with letters of encouragement, were sent down through the hole. But rescuers on the ground heard no more banging in the ensuing days.

"They didn't knock for fear of a gas explosion and loss of energy in the oxygen-deficient pit. Instead, they stayed where they were, waiting for rescuers to show up," Meng said.

After three days of being trapped, some young workers nearly went hysterical, fearing they would die there. To soothe their emotions, the older ones fabricated a story about three miners who were saved after being trapped underground for 25 days.

Search goes on

Meng went down the shaft again to look for more survivors.

As of press time, the death toll reached 12. Some 26 more miners are believed to be trapped in two other areas.

"Now we're racing against time and putting efforts in full swing to concentrate on these two areas," Liu Dezheng, spokesman for the rescue headquarters, told a news conference.

"There are 26 workers there, holding on and waiting for us to rescue them. We must face the work ahead with this in mind," he said, adding that pumping water out of the shaft was the top priority of the 5,000 rescuers.

"It's only after we've pumped water out and cleared a way through that we can go in. If we can't go in, we can't rescue them," he said. "At the moment we have not had any contact with them."

(Agencies)



Rescuers take a break to eat after non-stop working for days.

CFP Photo

paper of detonators and cartons, or cotton from their cotton-padded clothes. They embraced each other to keep warm."

Several of them gathered in a group and took turns swaying their mine lamps to signal any approaching rescuer.

Two days after the catastrophe, rescuers drilled a hole underground to ensure oxygen in the flooded pit. The trapped workers knocked on the hole to indicate they were alive. Soon after, 250

Opinion

What survives the Wangjialing Mine disaster?

In recent years, as news has become more open, mine accidents have become regular occurrences.

One hundred and fifty-three miners trapped in Wangjialing were regarded as another ordinary tragedy.

Then, a miracle occurred Monday when 115 were rescued. As the survivors were lifted out of the mine shaft, one exhausted rescuer broke into tears of joy. The survivors, lying on stretchers with their heads covered, applauded, their hands covered in soot. Everybody cheered their perseverance and the resilience of life.

It has been 12 days since the disaster, but rescuers have

not given up hope, doing everything they can to locate the last group of missing miners. Television programs show round-the-clock coverage of the rescue effort, a reminder that each life is priceless.

In China, there was a long period when the flag could only be flown at half-mast to mark the demise of a leader. It was during the Wenchuan earthquake when the flag first went down for the death of ordinary people.

The Wangjialing rescue is another milestone, maybe even an eye-opening experience for the nation. It shows that with respect and dedication for life, miracles can happen.

Analysis

Industrial consolidation for safety

The Wangjialing mine accident may push the government to implement its coal industrial consolidation programs, analysts said.

Shanxi was among the first provinces to implement coal industrial consolidation, closing small mines and merging many private mines into larger state-run companies. Wangjialing is a major state-run mine, and the accident has once again raised doubts over the government's consolidation program.

However, the accident may actually strengthen the government's resolve to impose tighter controls over the sector, as mining safety issues have

become overwhelming.

Wu Yin, deputy head of the National Energy Administration, sees that industrial consolidation will be the overriding trend within the coal industry.

Besides reducing mine accidents, the program would also improve productivity and ease environmental degradation, Wu said.

The next phase of the consolidation program has already been launched in Henan Province, and initiated in Shaanxi Province, Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia autonomous regions.

(By Huang Daohen)

Gold rush in China

Middle class culture writes gold's future

By Huang Daohen

China is setting the future of gold trading, the World Gold Council said in its latest report. Within just 10 years, Chinese demand for gold is set to double in tonnage terms, it said.

In a world hit with recessions, sub-prime crises, property bubbles, inflation, deflation and stock market crashes, gold is the safe haven that can weather any economic turmoil.

Chinese investors think differently: the yellow metal is not only a safe investment, but also a desirable fashion accessory.

Gold in the Year of the Tiger

It might be easy to pass up one small booth in Caibai, Beijing's famous gold jewelry shopping mall.

But that booth's primary customers are world leaders and legendary celebrities. Whenever foreign dignitaries and famous personalities visit the city, the booth is a must on the agenda.

For the past six years, the owner Li Jianxin has sold Chinese traditional gold coins, like Panda gold coins, which he collected himself.

As a veteran trader, Li has been a witness to the country's surge in gold consumption.

The World Gold Council's (WGC) new report, "Gold in the Year of the Tiger," predicts that the gold demand in China will double over the next decade due to jewelry consumption and investment needs.

Climbing at around 13 percent per year over the past five years, the report said China surpassed 300 tons in gold sales last year, making the country the world's second-largest gold consumer after India.

Demand from the two largest sectors, jewelry and investment, reached a combined total of 423 tons in 2009, with 314 tons supplied by domestic mines, WGC said.

"This shortfall creates a snowball effect, and even though gold prices are increasing, they will not dampen demand," the report said.

"Actually, we were very conservative [in our report]," Wang Lixin, director of the WGC's Beijing office, said.

Wang said the growth is based on the wealth accumulated by the Chinese population. Last year, domestic shoppers consumed 347 tons in jewelry, which is about 30 tons more than the country's total gold production.

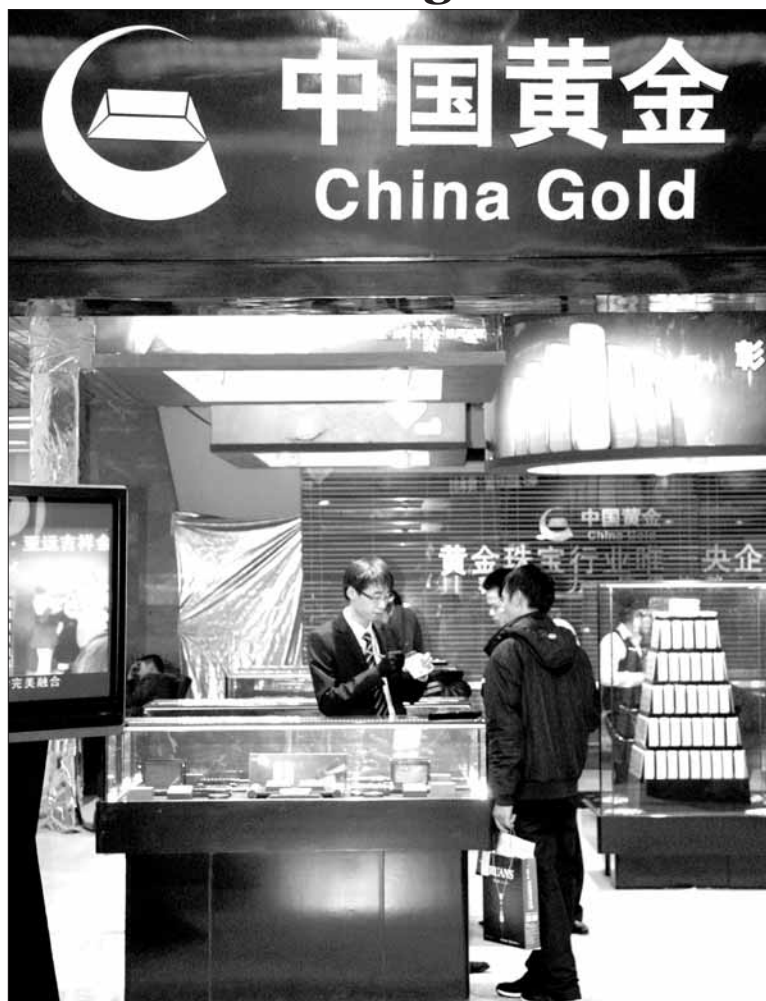
But on a per-capita basis, China is near the bottom, at 0.26 grams, Wang said.

If gold were consumed at the same rate per capita as in Saudi Arabia or Hong Kong, China would consume an additional 4,000 tons of gold jewelry each year, the report said.

"That's more than last year's worldwide demand - 3,386 tons - so the least enthusiastic gold devotees would probably agree that China is gold's future," Wang said.

Middle class tradition

Zhao Xiao, an economics professor at the University of Science



Chinese people have a centuries-old cultural affinity for gold.

CFP Photo

and Technology Beijing, said the WGC's forecast seems reasonable: it fits longstanding theories about China's economic evolution.

"Domestic consumption will and must replace exports as the growth engine as more people become wealthy and move up into the middle class," he said.

Fast economic development during the past decades is pushing millions into the middle class every year, Zhao said.

Incomplete estimates show that the number of middle class Chinese has already surpassed the entire US population and may double in the next decade.

They are buying spacious homes, brand-name luxury cars and gold jewelry. "Chinese people have a centuries-old cultural affinity for gold. It's a symbol of glamour and wealth," Zhao said.

Li agrees. While foreign customers come to his booth curious, Chinese customers come determined to buy.

"Wearing gold jewelry is an old tradition," Li said. It remains a popular gift even while fewer young people are wearing it.

"When a child is born, people like to give a gold lock or a gold zodiac animal as a congratulatory

gift," he said.

Business was good at Li's booth Tuesday afternoon. One local woman in her 30s surnamed Ma was choosing gold jewelry for her 2-year-old son and leaning toward a bracelet. "This is a luck-changing bracelet, and I am sure it will bring good luck for my baby," she said.

"Today is my boyfriend's birthday, and I want to buy a present for

him," a woman by Ma's side said.

Caibai Jewelry has reported a sales jump from 1 billion yuan in 2005 to 3 billion yuan in 2009. This year, the company predicts a growth rate of over 20 percent.

"Consumers are very wise with their purchases now," Li said. "If you buy jewelry, you can wear it. And at the same time, the gold keeps its value."

Background

How are Chinese investing in gold?

Chinese individual investors only recently began trading gold. In 2002, the Shanghai Gold Exchange opened and domestic commercial lenders began offering gold investment products to individuals.

Small investors choose gold leaf, which starts at 10 grams for 2,000 yuan. Currently, Bank of China, China Merchants Bank and Huaxia Bank offer gold leaf.

Investors with more cash prefer gold bullion, which costs tens of thousands of yuan for a small brick.

Veteran investors would go through gold traders or agencies which are involved in trading at the Shanghai Gold Exchange. They at times own gold indirectly by buying shares in gold trust, gold mining stocks and gold options and futures.

The domestic gold market is still evolving, Zhao Xiao said. The country first began trading gold futures in January 2008.

"Currently, the gold products available are not perfect for investors. Traders are not allowed to get involved in overseas markets," Zhao said. "As the local gold market opens and welcomes foreign banks, investors will have more choice for how to seek returns and hedge risks."



Wayne's coffee plans to have 200 shops in China.
Photo by Zhan Wanli

Wayne's taps into Chinese coffee market

By Huang Daohen

Wayne's Coffee, a Sweden-based coffeehouse chain, opened its first coffee shop in downtown Beijing this weekend, taking a step into the local market.

The shop, located in the Oriental Plaza on Wangfujing Street, came after the company's acquisition of the local coffee shop chain Ciao in January, said Kenneth Hermansson, CEO of Wayne's.

"It is really exciting to enter China, the market with the most potential for consumption," Hermansson said. The company plans to open two more shops in the city, including a flagship store near the Silk Market in the central business district.

First opened in Stockholm in 1994, Wayne's has 100 coffeehouses in 10 countries and has an annual turnover of 300 million yuan.

Hermansson said Wayne's will cooperate with local companies and plans eventually to have 200 shops in the country.

Analysts were cautious about the prospects for growth in the local coffee market as foreign brands pour in to fight it out. Trial efforts by domestic investors also pose a threat, said Wang Tao, industrial analyst with Oriental Securities in Beijing.

According to a research by Oriental Securities, domestic coffee consumption is 30,000 metric tons a year. Coffee demand could keep expanding by 20 percent per year, which would keep the market competitive.

Starbucks, the world's largest coffee-shop chain, recently started selling tea. "Though the company said the move is a push to offer customers healthier choices, it is also a business strategy to get ahead of competition," Wang said.

However, Hermansson was optimistic about the high-end market. "When we look at behavioral changes in the Chinese market, there is a growing preference for cafe culture," he said.

Hermansson said Wayne's goal is to become a new meeting place for people looking to sit down and talk over a brewed beverage.

We believe the Chinese market's potential depends on whether roasters can offer high quality products that suit local budgets and tastes, he said.

The battle of green ideas

Gov offers carbon credit purchases in lieu of tree planting



The capital launches carbon-trading initiatives to promote a greener lifestyle.

CFP Photo

By Zhang Dongya

The capital's new regulation on reforestation has a less laborious alternative to compulsory tree planting: it says that purchase of carbon credit is equivalent to planting trees. But some wonder whether this option would really benefit the environment.

The Beijing Municipal Regulation on Reforestation, which took effect March 1, says an individual can substitute 60 yuan of carbon credits for the planting of three trees. It says that citizens age 12 and older are required to plant three to five trees a year.

"Carbon credit has been available to individuals since 2008," said Yu Haiqun, spokeswoman

for the Carbon Credit Office of the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Landscape and Forestry.

Carbon credit is a permit that allows the holder to emit 1 ton of carbon dioxide and it is awarded to countries or groups that have reduced their greenhouse gases below their emission quotas. It can be traded on the international market on the current market price.

For individuals, purchasing carbon credits is a way for them to "pay" for their carbon dioxide emissions. Chinese nationals can buy carbon credits at Bank of China, China Post and online at the website of China Green Foundation. Sales will be remitted to the State Forestry Administration, which runs the country's

reforestation program.

The day the regulations took effect, seven firms and organizations, including Solana and China Agriculture Exhibition Center, made a carbon credit purchase, amounting to 21,000 yuan. Official data shows that since then, purchases in Beijing have reached 300 million yuan.

The municipal government also offered other alternatives to tree planting, such as adopting trees and forests and participating in reforestation campaigns. But it is planning a renewed drive to boost tree planting.

The Municipal Bureau of Landscape and Forestry recently set up 26 new posts where people can sign up to plant trees.

It also offered 3 million trees and 2,130 hectares of forest for adoption.

"Both individuals and companies can adopt trees," said an employee surnamed Huang at a Xicheng District office. "It is 50 yuan to adopt a regular tree. For older trees, the price varies according to age," she said. Xicheng has 1,750 trees in four parks up for adoption.

China established a National Volunteer Tree-Planting Campaign in 1981, which resulted in the planting of 170 million trees, 88 percent of which have survived. The country's current reforestation program covers 52 percent of its current land area, compared to 16 percent in the 1980s.

Comment

Planting more tangible

I'm wondering what the government will do with the money from carbon credit sales. Officials say it is for the greening of our surroundings, but I doubt that the plan can be accomplished. Compared to buying carbon credit, planting trees is a more tangible thing to do for the environment.

— Juliet Li, journalist
Adopting more meaningful

I planted trees as a child, but in recent decades have chosen to adopt trees offered by my residential community and company. Tree planting is a fun group activity but sadly, few of the trees survive.

Adopting trees is a good way to help the environment, just like purchasing carbon credit, although I find adopting trees more meaningful.

— Edward Zhang, media marketing officer

Need alternative to traditional methods

I joined a tree-planting activity organized by my company this year. Just as I expected, people had a great time but the trees were not planted well. I don't think many of our trees will survive. I think it is necessary to offer options to replace traditional methods such as tree planting.

— Jackson Wang, salesman

More information, incentives needed

Carbon credits are new to me; I have no idea what they are about. I think people need more information, such as how it works and how the environment will benefit. Also, incentives are needed. At least, I haven't found enough reason to buy carbon credits yet.

— Wang Xiaosu, critic

CCTV forbids use of English abbreviations

By Zhao Hongyi

The management of China Central Television (CCTV) recently issued a directive prohibiting employees from using English abbreviations in the network's programs, a move that some citizens think is a step back.

The memo says that in order to "purify" the use of Chinese and keep local audiences tuned in, news broadcasters and program hosts in particular should stop using abbreviations like GDP, WTO, NBA, F1, GPS and MTV. Otherwise, they should add the Chinese translation after them.

"It's true," Sun Zhengping, a CCTV sports-show host said, but added that the abbreviations can still appear on screen graphics. "But when we say them, we must add the Chinese explanation."

For instance, NBA should be presented in Chinese as "the national basketball association

of the US," GDP as "gross domestic product" and WTO as "world trade organization."

Sun defended the directive, saying the country has a massive population of TV viewers and "you cannot expect all of them to understand English."

Three decades after instituting

economic reforms, China is as globalized as any country, with foreign elements permeating all aspects of life—sports, music, science and technology, fashion, education. Some people think CCTV's new policy is not a move in the right direction.

"The thing is, many English abbreviations have become part

of many Chinese people's daily life," netizen Henry2004 said on news portal netease.com. "It will become complicated, confusing and strange if the broadcasters add translations" after commonly used abbreviations, he said.

"We have long been trying to simplify Chinese characters and

fortunately, today we have English abbreviations to refer to complicated subjects," he said. "Why should we turn back and use the full, strange translations?"

He is among those who believe this practice will not survive in the fast-changing, fast-moving contemporary world.

Comment

Process of natural selection

The French have also insisted on keeping their language pure. The French government strongly opposes the use of "email," instead recommending "courriel," a combination of "courier" (mail) and "electronique" (electronic). The recommendation might not get the support of its citizens; what will remain standing will be the result of natural selection.

— Shi Yu,
World News Report

A favorable order

This is an order, so we have no option but to follow. Personally, I'm fine with it.

— Yu Jia,
news broadcaster, CCTV

Era of global communication

Purify the use of Chinese? What do you think of the Chinese we have created? What do you think of the appreciation we get for it from native English speakers? Take it easy, man! It's the era for world communi-

cation and exchange.

— Song Yang, manager,
YangYang Culture Exchanges

More abbreviations needed

There is a reason for the acceptance of English abbreviations in China. We should explain to the public more English abbreviations in newspapers and official documents, instead of just on the TV screen.

— Liu Xiao,
sports.netease.com

Not sounding like an encyclopedia

Today, I sat on a sofa watching the final match of the NCAA while drinking cola. Should I say, "Today, I sat on a sofa watching the final match of the National Collegiate Athletic Association of the United States and drinking a combination of the juice of coca leaves and cola fruit?"

— liyang1772 in a post on
zjdaily.zjol.com

Expats promote return to simpler, more eco-friendly ride

By Wang Yu

With 4.2 million cars on the road and counting, Beijing's traffic congestion problem can only get worse. Shannon Bufton and Ines Brunn would rather look at the possibilities, so the expats formed Smarter Than Car (STC), a group that promotes a return to a simpler, more environmentally-friendly lifestyle by choosing cycling over driving.

"Beijing used to be the city of bicycles. Foreigners who have never been here associate the city with the Great Wall, the Forbidden City and bicycles. Many hutong residents feel it's a shame that bicycles are vanishing in Beijing," says Bufton, 33, an urban designer from Australia who came to Beijing eight months ago after stints in Shanghai and Dubai.

The idea for STC was born in January as a result of a surprise birthday party for Bufton's girlfriend. The invitation was for 9 pm on a Friday at a place on the Second Ring Road. Because it was a surprise party everyone arrived on time, but some guests didn't have time to eat. As it turned out those who had time to get home and change clothes rode bikes.

"These things happen a lot in the city center. Life can become more convenient if you switch to smarter form of transportation," Bufton says.

He decided to make STC happen with the help of Brunn, 34, a German trick cyclist who owns Nattoke, a bicycle and juggling shop in Wudaoying Hutong. The five-month-old shop, named after a popular Ugandan food, customizes bicycles and sells parts for fixed-gear bikes – the type that some STC members favor.

"Fixed-gear bikes represent design simplicity. When you're



Shannon Bufton (left) and Ines Brunn

Photo provided by Ines Brunn

riding it, you realize that it's the most pleasurable and efficient way to ride," Bufton says, but adds that all bike riders share the pleasure of not having to worry about parking.

Both Bufton and Brunn discovered cycling as teens.

Bufton grew up on a farm near Melbourne and learned to drive at age 7 – enjoying his freedom driving around the farm. At 16, he went to school in the city where driving was prohibited until a person reached 18. He turned to bicycling and discovered mobility as well as a weapon

against traffic jams and used it as a way to get his freedom back. At the time, Bufton said he traveled 35 kilometers on a typical day.

Brunn, on the other hand, took up cycling as a sport when she was 13. She later became a member of Germany's national artistic cycling team and competed across Europe for close to two decades. She came to Beijing for the first time in 2001 and decided to move here three years later. She and Bufton met at a riding event half a year ago and became friends.

A fixed-gear bicycle costs

2,000 to 3,000 yuan, a fortune to wage earners. It is better for the group to look for membership among the capital's middle class.

The group's founders are not expecting a U-turn in people's preference for cars. They understand that to Chinese people who have grown up riding bikes, a car is an irresistible status symbol.

"STC is not against cars. We organize events to test the efficiency of riding to demonstrate it is often faster than cars in the city center," Bufton says. "We're developing an iPhone application

that uses GPS to log a rider's average speed and usual routes."

But Bufton also knows that when people become richer, they realize that better use of time earns them more money.

"When I was in Dubai as an urban designer, we calculated economic losses due to traffic congestion. We found that people could only attend one or two meetings a day, because important persons were usually trapped on the road," he says.

Well, like STC says, one way to get out of a tight spot is to hop on a bike.

Chinese culture enthusiast becomes guide in Finland's Expo pavilion

By Chu Meng

Before Olli Suominen came to Shanghai to train as a guide for Finland's pavilion at the Shanghai Expo, he was a student at Renmin University of China.

Suominen, 26, is among 37 Finnish university students in China who passed a rigorous guide-selection process that began in 2008. This month, they are getting a crash course on a host of subjects, including the Expo's various activities, how to handle massive visitor traffic and how to conduct first aid.

"I am busy to death right now with no time to take your questions," Suominen said in fluent Chinese during a phone call on March 29, his first day in Shanghai. "We are at a museum in order to become more familiar with the local culture," he said.

Suominen was born in Tampere, one of Finland's biggest cities, and became curious about China because of kung fu movies. "I really liked watching kung fu films as a boy. I got more and more interested in martial arts until I decided to learn," he said.

An interest in the Chinese language and culture followed.

"While I was on voluntary military service, I studied Chinese on my own whenever I could. Sometimes I even studied inside a cold, dark tent, at -25 C. That was when I decided that I wanted to learn the language and culture more seriously," Suominen said during our next phone call.

He earned a bachelor's degree in East Asian Studies, focusing on Chinese, at Tampere Univer-



Olli Suominen gives a presentation to his fellow Expo guides.

Photo provided by Olli Suominen

sity, in southwestern Finland, in 2007. He is now working toward a master's degree at the same school and is studying at Renmin University as an exchange student in Beijing while researching his thesis, "Chinese-European Political Relations During the Deng Xiaoping's Era."

One day in 2008, he saw an ad on campus saying the Finnish "Kirnu" pavilion's committee was looking for Finnish nationals to serve as pavilion guides. Suominen immediately submitted an application.

"The procedure we went through was quite long. First, we had phone and face-to-face interviews. Then, those who passed had a weekend 'team-training day' where the final group was chosen," Suominen said. "I also attended a voluntary course

called 'Knowing Finland and Working at an Expo,' which was designed for those who were hoping to work at the Expo."

They are now taking classes on various subjects from 9 am to 5 pm every day. Suominen said he and his classmates have no idea what they are going to be taught from one day to the next.

"As our teachers have said, these are pretty much uncharted seas, so nobody knows for sure what being a guide entails once the Expo opens," he said.

The bottom line is that the guides must leave guests with a good impression of Finland and its people. "I want to make them feel that the Finnish pavilion is not just about our exhibition but also about warmth and human touch," Suominen said.

US firms in China optimistic about future despite policy concerns

By Han Manman

Most US companies are doing well in China and remain optimistic about their prospects, says a recent survey by the American Chamber of Commerce in China (AmCham-China). The findings are contrary to international media reports saying more and more foreign companies feel unwelcome.

The annual Business Climate Survey comes amid a series of incidents that have rattled foreign businesses, including Google's withdrawal from the mainland and the conviction of four Rio Tinto employees for espionage.

The survey highlights the profitability of US companies in China and the importance of economic ties between the two countries. "Despite recent public differences on specific issues, US and China relations remain strong," AmCham-China President Christian Murck said. "Both the US and Chinese economies benefit greatly from the relationship."

According to the survey, US firms have rebounded after reporting a significant drop in business last year — one of the toughest global economic environments in generations. Some 91 percent of companies said their outlook is

"optimistic," reflecting the perception that China has emerged from the downturn in a solid position and that the country's mid-term outlook is bright.

While much of the news is positive, there are also some negative trends. "There are some areas of concern regarding the regulatory environment," Murck said.

"The lack of consistent application of the law is a growing problem, particularly as US companies expand across China," he said, pointing out that for the first time in the survey's history, "inconsistent regulatory interpretation" now ranks as the number

one business challenge for US companies here.

There is also rising concern among high tech and IT companies that in an attempt to encourage domestic innovation, the Chinese government may discriminate against foreign-invested enterprises and imports, Murck said.

Nevertheless, the survey showed a positive overall economic environment and that "China is good for the US economy and American jobs," he said.

The Chinese government is trying to send a more welcoming message to foreign businesses despite a number of policy loop-

holes that have dampened the confidence of some of them, said Wang Zhile, director of the research center on transnational corporations under the Ministry of Commerce. "The mainstream policy is positive and has remained unchanged," he said.

According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, China remains the most attractive destination for foreign investors.

The 2010 AmCham-China Business Climate Survey was conducted among chamber members in late 2009: 388 companies participated in the study.

Pakistani Islamic party establishes ties with CPC

By Zhang Dongya

Five members of the Pakistani party Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) arrived in China Monday for a week's visit at the invitation of the Communist Party of China (CPC).

"This marks the official start of relations between the two parties," Maulana Fazal-ur-Rahman, JUI's chairman, said during a reception at the Pakistani Embassy the day his delegation arrived.

"To promote understanding between the two countries, it is not enough to have government

exchanges. Party-to-party communication is an important supplement," Fazal said.

"The political exchange between our two parties is based on China and Pakistan's friendship over the past 60 years. This friendship lives in the hearts and minds of the people of both countries and will further strengthen with time," he said.

The JUI, or Council of Islamic Clerics, is a religious party that runs most of the country's *madrasah* or religious schools. It became part of a government

coalition after the national elections of 2002 and 2008.

This is Fazal's second visit to China. He first came in 1995 as head of the national assembly's foreign affairs committee and met with senior CPC officials.

He said he remembers China's plans for economic development at the time and said the country has accomplished many of them in the past decade and a half.

The JUI chief acknowledged China's contributions to Pakistan, including assistance in infrastructure development and economic

growth. Fazal said the Pakistani people are grateful for China's help and look forward to further cooperation, including strides in the international arena. "Both countries could promote better relationships among other countries," he said.

Fazal said the JUI aims to promote peace, human rights and economic development in the South Asian nation.

From Beijing, his delegation will head to Shanghai for two days, then conclude its China visit in Urumqi, Xinjiang.



Maulana Fazal-ur-Rahman
Photo by Li Yan

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Beijing Playhouse stages musical about marriage next month



Beijing Playhouse conducts a rehearsal of their new play *I Do! I Do!* at Goose and Duck restaurant.

Photo provided by Beijing Playhouse

By Annie Wei

Beijing Playhouse's spring offering this year is the Broadway musical *I Do! I Do!*, running from May 14 to 23 at Goose and Duck restaurant on East Fourth Ring Road.

I Do! I Do!, created in 1966 by Tom Jones and Harvey Schmidt, focuses on the ups and downs experienced by Agnes and Michael Snow throughout their 50-year marriage that begins in the late 19th century. The set consists only of their bedroom, dominated by a large four-poster bed.

Beijing Playhouse invited journalists Monday to a rehearsal

in which they presented three scenes: the couple's wedding, their becoming parents and quarrels they had.

The company designed the play to be interactive. During the wedding scene, for instance, the Snows walked up to the audience after leaving the church, encouraging them to throw flowers at the newlyweds.

The group chose to stage *I Do! I Do!* because its subject of marriage is universal, said Brandon Blackburn-Dwyer, an actor and singer from New York who plays Michael Snow.

To bring the musical closer to Chinese audiences, it is being

promoted as akin to *Jinjun*, a popular Chinese TV series about a couple who has been married for 50 years.

The play's simple set and small cast make it easier to tour small community theaters and neighboring cities like Tianjin, said Chris Verrill, Beijing Playhouse's executive director.

"Because it is a two person cast with a small crew, we are able to transport the show to various venues throughout Beijing," Verrill said.

One of Beijing Playhouse's missions is to bring English theater to the local community.

Its partnership with theaters

like Star Theater and Mao Live House will help bring English theater to places where locals are already going, he said.

Beijing Playhouse was established in 2006 and is composed of expats who want an outlet for their passion for theater. All members have full-time jobs.

"We practice three times a week and three to four hours each time," said Beth Kerzee, the company's musical director and a teacher at an international school.

I Do! I Do! will be staged Thursday to Sunday, from May 14 to 23, in English with Chinese subtitles. For more information, visit beijingplayhouse.com.

NGO sponsors benefit concert for raptors

By Liang Meilan

Don't Eat Friends, a non-government organization promoting animal protection, sponsored a concert at Weibozhiyan Club last Sunday to raise funds for the Beijing Raptor Rescue Center.

Singer Qu Quancheng and local bands Sweet Rock and Jelly Fish supported the event by performing for free. Xie Zheng, founder of Don't Eat Friends and a musician, sang an original composition about wildlife.

All proceeds from the event will go to the Beijing Raptor Rescue Center, which helps sick, injured or lost wild birds of prey, as well as those confiscated from poachers.

The center's rehabilitation therapist Liu Shuai spoke at the concert about the precarious situation of Beijing's birds of prey and how to rescue them.

Beijing is home to many raptors like owls and hawks, most of which are first- or second-class nationally protected animals.



Qu Quancheng and local bands Sweet Rock and Jelly Fish singing at Weibozhiyan Club to raise funds for the Beijing Raptor Rescue Center

Photo provided by Beijing Raptor Rescue Center

"They not only reside at the outskirts but also frequently appear downtown," Liu said, adding that the city also sees many migratory birds of prey in spring.

It is in spring that raptors

quickly multiply, so it is common to see young that have fallen from their nests. "Baby raptors have strict nutritious requirements, so it is irresponsible to bring them home and feed them human food

like boiled meat, which can lead to malnutrition and bone deformities," Liu said.

"The best action is to put the fledgling back in its nest or near its parents. If that is not possible, put it in a warm, safe place with dim light; for instance, in a carton with scraps of paper, and then contact the local wild animal rescue department as soon as possible," she said.

Liu said that the birds are also threatened with loss of habitat, food poisoning, poaching and illegal breeding. Unscientific treatment and breeding in unsanitary conditions may lead to deadly diseases such as eelworm disease, she said.

The Beijing Raptor Rescue Center, which is supported by the Beijing Municipal Forestry Bureau, has treated some 3,000 raptors since its establishment in 2001. More than half the birds have been released back into the wild. For rescue leads, call the center's hotline 6220 5666.

Event

Dragon boat training at Houhai

Gold Sailing Water Sport Club holds dragon boat training for rowers of every level at Houhai every Sunday. The club includes Chinese and expat members.

Where: Gold Sailing Water Sport Club, 1 Houhai Xiyan, Xicheng District

When: Every Sunday, 1:30 pm

Tel: 6401 2664

Cost: 50 yuan

Spring planting at the Roadhouse

Early April afternoons are the perfect time for gardening, with a soft breeze blowing and the birds chirping. The Roadhouse, a restoration of one of the first restaurants near the Mutianyu Great Wall, gives lovers of gardening an opportunity to get their hands dirty while enjoying the fresh air. After a hard day's work, participants will enjoy a hearty barbecue dinner, accompanied by live music, under the Great Wall.

Where: The Roadhouse, Mutianyu Village, Huairou District

When: April 10, 2-4 pm

Tel: 6162 6506

Cost: Free (participants get free local beer and soft drinks)

Tea-tasting workshop

The Hutong will be giving a class on the ins and outs of Chinese tea tasting. Participants will be introduced to six teas from various regions and learn how to brew them right. They will also get a crash course on the history and mythology infused in each cup of Chinese tea.

Where: The Hutong, 1 Jiudaowan Zhongxiang Hutong, Dongcheng District

When: April 11, 3-5 pm

Tel: 15901046127

Cost: 160 yuan, 150 yuan for members

China's cello musicians

Sunday Salon, a lecture series presented by *Time Out Beijing* and The Bookworm, introduces people to Chinese music - traditional, classical and contemporary. This month's session features a performance by the cellist Chu Yibing and the China Philharmonic Cellists, the first chamber group on the mainland.

Where: The Bookworm, 4 Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District

When: April 11, 7:30-9 pm

Tel: 6586 9507

Cost: 30 yuan, 20 yuan for members

(By Liang Meilan)

Transportation ministry reopens train ticket bookings by phone



Beijing Railway Station reopens its phone booking service in both Chinese and English.

CFP Photo

By Zhao Hongyi

Buying train tickets just got a bit easier. This month, the Ministry of Railway re-allowed ticket bookings by phone in the capital, nearly a decade after it halted the service in favor of online transactions.

From 9 am to 6 pm every day, people can call 6526 0000 to book tickets for trains departing from all Beijing railway stations: Beijing Railway Station, Beijing West Railway Station, Beijing South Railway Station and Beijing North Railway Station.

"We assure you that you can purchase tickets through this system as long as there are seats left," Wang Jianjun, manager for ticket bookings at Beijing Railway Station, said, "but you have to take note of heavy travel seasons like Spring Festival and National Day."

Beijing Railway Station switched to online ticketing in 2000. The new

system, however, led to a surge in scalping, so the ministry decided to switch back to phone booking.

Tickets for the D lines (high-speed trains) and Z lines (direct) go on sale three to 21 days before departure, while those for the K lines (rapid) and T lines (highly rapid) will be available three to 11 days in advance.

Passengers can pick up their tickets at train stations or any ticket outlet throughout the city from 9 am to 6 pm, and need to provide their name, telephone number and ticket details. The phone service costs 5 yuan and is also available in English.

"Our experience is that some people do not pick up their tickets," Wang of Beijing Railway Station said. "We do hope passengers get their tickets in time." Otherwise, he said, the bookings will be forfeited and unclaimed tickets will be resold.

The Beijing railway system has 20 staff

members on standby to help with phone bookings in case the line gets clogged, Wang said.

It has also opened six new ticketing outlets near subway stations:

- Chaoyang District: Anyuan Dongli Ticket Sales Window (south of Huixin Xijie station on Subway Line 5)
- Chongwen District: Qianmen Ticket Sales Window (Qianmen station on Subway Line 2)
- Dongcheng District: Beixinqiao (300 meters north of Zhangzizhonglu station on Subway Line 5)
- Fengtai District: Shanxi Tower, 1 Yangqiao Xi Li (Beijing South Railway Station stop on Subway Line 4)
- Haidian District: Dayangfang Ticket Sales Window (50 meters north of Beiyuanlubei station on Subway Line 5)
- Shijingshan District: Sun Island Hotel (Gucheng station on Subway Line 1)

ASK Beijing Today

Email your questions to: weiyang@ynet.com

My company needs mount arms for our computer monitors. Are they available in town?

Computer-monitor-mount arms are quite hard to find in Beijing since few companies supply them. One of them is Limingrongsheng Company, located in Haidian District. It sells single, dual and multiple monitor arms featuring a lift-and-pivot mechanism, which allows users to easily reposition the monitor's height. The devices are available in black or silver. Call the company at 8277 0170 or check out its website, bjrosn.com.

I studied porcelain throwing and firing for a few months in my home country and want to continue in Beijing. Are there any ceramic studios in town offering pay-as-you-throw service?

There are a few porcelain shops where you can do this, but most of them are operated by nonprofessionals. If you want professional guidance, Yilie Ceramic Studio near Xidan commercial district may be for you. It provides various porcelain do-it-yourself services, such as making vases, cartoon sculptures and cooking ware. Customers can work on their own or take a one-on-one class. Its teachers are renowned local ceramic artists. For more information, call 13051513511 or visit yltb.net.

My mom is taking a flight to Jinan, Shandong Province, for business. But a couple of days ago, she wounded her leg and now has difficulty walking. Can Capital Airport provide her assistance?

The airport offers assistance to ailing passengers or those with a disability at all three terminals. Staff members at the service center will accompany and assist the passenger from check-in to boarding. Terminal 3 also provides free wheelchairs for use within the airport. Passengers can make a booking for whatever services they need at the Passenger Service Center on the second floor of Terminal 3. Call 6454 1111 for more information.

(By Liang Meilan)

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The Bolshoi's opera Eugene Onegin is a creation of the Russian geniuses Alexander Pushkin and Tchaikovsky.



Eugenia Onegin shattered all existing records for an opera's longevity, when it debuted in 1879.

Rebuilding

Bolshoi brings greatness of

By He Jianwei

It is no exaggeration to call Bolshoi Theater the aircraft carrier of Russian art. Those who shaped the fields of ballet and opera.

But the theater faces two major challenges: its building needs restoration and so does its repertoire.

Five years ago, Bolshoi began tackling the first problem: the restored theater will be ready by 2012. From April 24 to May 5, Bolshoi will perform two ballets and one opera at the Bolshoi Theater. The programs are the essence of Russian ballet and opera.

Reviving classics

Bolshoi Theater has been an important fixture in Moscow, indeed in Russia in general, for 200 years.

Bolshoi Ballet and Bolshoi Opera draw from a stable of productions, and any one of them may be performed on a given evening.

It has been the debut stage for many historical classics: Tchaikovsky's ballet *Swan Lake* debuted at the theater in 1877.

In Beijing, the troupes will perform *The Pharaoh's Daughter* and *Don Quixote*, both of which were choreographed by Marius Petipa, regarded as the father of Swan Lake.

The Pharaoh's Daughter debuted in 1862 in Petersburg and was first performed at Bolshoi in 1864. But in Soviet times, it was considered to be ideologically immature and dropped from the repertoire. It was almost forgotten.

A French choreographer, Pierre Lacotte, who has breathed new life into more than one forgotten masterpiece of centuries past, had long ago been enthusiastic about resurrecting Petipa's *The Pharaoh's Daughter*.

Petipa's play was reborn at Bolshoi in 2000.

"Before Bolshoi commissioned this reconstruction work from Lacotte, this masterpiece had not been performed for more than 80 years," Iksanov said.

Petipa's ballet was not recorded on video or by choreologists, so when Lacotte started to work on it, he had scores, sketches of stage designs and costumes, some photos and what remained in people's memories.

"His [Lacotte's] own teacher Liubov Egorova, a ballerina, showed him some variations. And all the rest he had to reconstruct in the style and spirit of Petipa and classical ballet of the 19th century," Iksanov said.

Petipa created *Don Quixote* for the Bolshoi, and it debuted in 1869. Since its first showing, the repertoire has become a favorite piece for many ballet companies and choreographers.

The version that the Bolshoi will perform at the NCPA is based on the work of Russian choreographer Alexander Gorsky, a contemporary of Petipa and is famous for restaging Petipa's classical ballets.

"It is quite a rare classical ballet, which is based on a happy story. It suits our dancers' ability to be not only perfect in the technical sense but to perform as real artists. That's why we are often invited to show this ballet during our tour," Iksanov said.

In addition to its ballets, the theater will perform the opera *Eugene Onegin* - a creation of two Russian geniuses, Alexander Pushkin and Tchaikovsky. Unlike most operas, which usually feature legendary heroes, it tells the love story of ordinary people. When it debuted in 1879 it shattered all existing records for an opera's longevity.

The director Boris Pokrovsky created the Bolshoi's first version at the end of World War II. "It had a great symbolic impact. It was a watershed showing the end of the horrible years of war and the beginning of new life," Iksanov said.

Director Dmitri Tchemniakov recreated it in 2006. "It's impossible for the theater work to be 'alive' for 60 years. It is not a painting or music, the life of theater productions is much shorter. We have to be understood by a contemporary audience. We have to preserve all the best traditions of the past, but also to create new works," Iksanov said.

Restoring history

Bolshoi's current theater was built in 1824, in Moscow. It is a classical building with an eight-col-

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Tradition

Russian stage to Beijing

The theater has a history of 234 years and has trained artists

Several masters have been lost – either to death or other countries. It will open October 2011. In the mean time, Bolshoi is on tour. The National Center for the Performing Arts (NCPA). The three

Portico crowned by the carriage of Apollo in the center square.

Over, by the time it was built, the company had already existed for half a century – since Empress Catherine II granted Prince Peter Urusov, a passionate lover, the privilege of running all theatrical affairs in Moscow in 1776.

The 824 building withstood two world wars and survived fires before it closed for restoration in 1992. It underwent many small renovations over the years, never one that cost the equivalent of 5 billion rubles.

When we closed Bolshoi Theater for renovation, because we had no choice. The historic house

was not without any major renovation for 150 years. That truly was its limit. Security, fire regulations and working conditions meant it was the end of the line, it was not possible to operate in the old building," Anatoly Iksanov, general manager of the Bolshoi, said.

The renovation is a huge and difficult project. It serves the historical building while adhering to modern safety standards and the needs of contemporary theater.

The original plan, the theater was to reopen in early 2010. But Iksanov confirmed the date was pushed back to the fall of 2011.

The most difficult thing was to reinforce its base. To support the existing house by putting in a new ground, which is 20 meters under the existing ground," Iksanov said. "This part of the job is already done. We are now restoring the historical interiors, the German company Bosch is installing technical equipment."

The renovation has government support. Several years ago, President Putin of the Russian Federation ordered to provide the Bolshoi Theater and other cultural institutions with a grant. Unfortunately, we did not have any financial difficulties in those harsh times [economic crisis],"

Reducing stars

It is precious and cruel for a 200-year-old theater to carry on traditions and foster new stars while losing its masters' major tasks.

Many maestros died and some left the theater for other countries. The leaving is a loss for the Bolshoi, not just for the ballet. "It has spread Russian ballet to many ballet companies in France, Italy, and China," said Zhao Ruheng, artistic director and former president of the National Ballet of China.

To cultivate future stars, the Bolshoi has its own school here from the beginning, pupils learn classical ballet. "In our theater, the craft is passed directly from one generation to another – all our coaches are Bolshoi Ballet stars," Iksanov said.

During the restoration, the Bolshoi intends to go back to a repertory theater with brilliant art must be cultivated and nurtured for many years.

Earlier it began to recruit students for its Youth Program, which will forge new members for the theater's troupe. Auditions for vocalists will be held in major cities around Russia. There were over 100 applicants for the 10 vacancies.

The Bolshoi needs new blood. "Then we can find classical art to be modern and still speak to the audience," Iksanov said.



Bolshoi's Don Quixote is based on choreography by Alexander Gorsky.

Bolshoi Theater Programs

Eugene Onegin

When: April 24-27, 7:30

The Pharaoh's Daughter

When: April 30 – May 2, 7:30 pm

Don Quixote

When: May 3-5, 7:30 pm

Where: Opera House of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District
Admission: 280-1,280 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

Photos provided by the National Center for the Performing Arts



The lens that write the Depression

By Charles Zhu

Photojournalist Dorothea Lange's pictures, especially her historic photo "Migrant Mother," have defined how America remembers the Depression.

Now Linda Gordon, professor of history at the New York University, chronicles the photographer's lifetime of professional anxiety and drama in *Dorothea Lange: A Life Beyond Limits*.

The iconic "Migrant Mother" taken at a California farm workers' camp has appeared in textbooks and on postage stamps. It has become part of the US's memory of its past, and that is the greatest achievement a photojournalist can expect. Lange is remembered today as a Goliath in the rise of photojournalism.

The photo shows an American woman who worked a farm with three of her 11 young children: one in her embrace and the two others clinging in search of motherly care. Her hard-lined face shows an unbeaten strength and Hemingway-esque grace under pressure.

Lange was then employed by the Farm Security Administration, one of the New Deal's agencies, to document the lives of black and Mexican-American farmhands during the Great Depression.

Driving northward on California's Expressway on a winter's day, she passed the Pea-Pickers Camp near Nipomo. At the camp, Lange met Florence Thompson, a 32-year-old mother of 11 who was living as a sharecropper.

Lange took photos of Thompson

and her children in different poses.

For the historic photo, she "made the unusual decision to ask the two youngsters leaning on their mother to turn their faces away from the camera," Gordon writes. "She was building the drama and impact of the photograph by forcing the viewer to focus entirely on Florence Thompson's beauty and anxiety, and by letting the children's bodies, rather than their faces, express their dependence on their mother."

She did not know at that time that she was recording history.

Gordon, the author, is a scholar of gender and family in modern American life. She focuses significantly on Lange's life as a woman and as a female photojournalist, a trade usually dominated by men.

Lange was born in Hoboken, New Jersey, in 1895 to parents of German descent. She had a severe bout with polio when she was a child that left her with a weak leg. She had an unhappy childhood after her father deserted the family. Her physical handicap as well as her childhood emotional trauma made her sympathetic to those marginalized in society.

Lange learned photography by studying portrait photographers in New York. "Photography was a new profession and therefore not defined as a uniquely male skill or tradition," Gordon says. She set up a photo shop in San Francisco which was "successful beyond her dreams."

She was first married to the artist Maynard Dixon, and then to Paul

Schuster Taylor, an economics professor who got her acquainted with Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal.

Gordon pictures Lange as a radical who was sympathetic to the miseries of migrant workers and indignant to their exploitation by agricultural magnates. But at the same time, Lange did not like the chaos of social and class conflicts.

"Much of the action (labor protests) was so fast-moving and so violent that slow-moving Lange could not or would not get close," Gordon writes. "This was the territory of the new breed of adventurous photojournalists."

For her part, Lange paid great attention to the inner emotions of the deprived. "Her documentary photography was portrait photography," Gordon says. "What made it different was its subjects, and thereby its politics." She was, in Gordon's words, "America's pre-eminent photographer of democracy."

Lange had tried photographing interned Japanese-Americans during World War II and attempted avant-garde imagery before her death in 1965.

However, she remains most dearly remembered for her photo of that noble migrant mother, the symbol of the tough spirit of America in the midst of history's worst economic woes.



DOROTHEA LANGE

A LIFE BEYOND LIMITS



LINDA GORDON

Dorothea Lange: A Life Beyond Limits
By Linda Gordon, 560pp, W.W. Norton & Company, \$35.00

Timezone8 book listing



Timezone8 is a Hong Kong-based publisher, distributor and retailer of books on contemporary art, architecture, photography and design. This week, it recommends three new titles for *Beijing Today* readers.

Robert van der Hilst: Shanghai 1990-1993

By Gu Zheng, 120pp, Timezone8, \$45.00

The book contains Dutch photographer Robert van der Hilst's color Kodachrome photographs of a transforming Shanghai in the early 1990s.

Varvara Shavrova: Untouched

By Katie Hill, Sue Hubbard and Reyahn King, 166pp, Timezone8, \$45.00

Beijing-based Moscow-born Shavrova, who lived for 15 years in the UK, presents black-and-white photographs from her travels to Russia, England, Ireland, China, India and Australia.

China Under Construction

Edited by Maya Kouskaya, 140pp, Futurista Arts, \$42.00

Aiming to change the exoticized, politicized stereotype of Chinese art familiar to Western viewers, this volume offers a fresh look at the complex realities of a nation undergoing profound transformation through the eyes of 27 visionary artists, including Cang Xin, Cao Fei, Cui Xiuwen and Dai Guangyu.

(By He Jianwei)

Author's love obsession transcends sexes

By He Jianwei

Playwright Liao Yimei, 40, has an obsession with two characters: the playboy and the paranoid.

Their extreme reactions to love may be the most real presentation of the emotion, she says.

In her modern fable *Amber*, a man dies in an accident and his heart is transplanted into the body of a playboy living a decadent life. The girlfriend of the deceased believes she can help the playboy redeem his soul. She struggles to pursue her love in a city full of desires, and in the end can't tell whether she loves the rogue or his heart.

The Beijing playwright spoke about *Amber* and her other works March 27 at Capital Library's lecture hall to a packed house: visitors overflowed onto the floor space in front of the first row.

Liao has long refused to be known as a "female" playwright. She has never written a play with a female lead, and has never been accused of writing male leads who sound "feminine."

"A creator is not specifically man or woman, but of both sexes. The playboy and paranoid in this play just reflect my attitudes toward life," Liao said.

Sex experts emphasize the difference between men and women in love. But Liao said sexual divergence is not the root of the problem.

"Obviously, men and women differ physiologically. But what is the spiritual difference between them? I find that we feel hurt when we love because we are human, not because we are men or women," she said.

The writer may look slim and weak, but the way people see you does not define the way you are, she said.

"I never think I am thin. People always say I am or describe me as such, but in my mind I'm strong and tough," she said.

Liao is not the most productive writer – she has penned three plays, one novel and four movie scripts – but her portrayals of the face of love have won her many fans.

"I'm only interested in the truth. It's an age of information and we are surrounded by bubbles. I don't want to base my reaction on how the bubble looks: I want to know what the bubble will be after it bursts," she said.

Liao Yimei and her two books – *Amber* • Rhinoceros in Love and *Pessimist's Bouquet*



CFP Photo

Fashion art turns rags into urban apparel

By Liang Meilan

As April 22, the 41st Earth Day, draws near, many organizations are pushing for better environmental protection. The fashion circles is no exception. Green Attitude: ARFT Fashion Art Exhibition for two weeks showed off thought-provoking environment-friendly designs at The Village.

Artists and designers from 10 countries displayed their newest "green" fashion works – wearable and unwearable – at the two-story exhibition hall. Its curator Lü Yue, dean of the Fashion Design Department at the China Central Academy of Fine Arts, said he was inspired by the fashion show Green Style at the Copenhagen Climate Conference 2009.



Xiao Yu's Balance
Photo provided by Xiao Yu

Key Sook Geum's Harmony and Conflicts
Photo provided by Key Sook Geum

Kong Fanfan's Thorn
Photo provided by Kong Fanfan

Larrain's L'Oise de Parapluie
Photo provided by Larrain

Lü Yue's Yin an Yang, Day and Night
Photo provided by Lü Yue

Balancing fashion and ecology

"Unlike commercial-oriented fashion, 'fashion art' combines creativity, ideology, artistry and perceptiveness. It's an art that sets the future of fashion," Lü says.

Most participants found creative ways to make their works greener, and each item had some new thought-provoking highlight.

"I think one of the most meaningful is Malaysian designer Wong Yoon Sin's 'Conflict,'" Lü says.

Wong's two-piece outfit combines an elegantly leather jacket with a chaotic cotton skirt: the pairing suggests that fashion and the environment are in contradictory position.

"No matter what the process, fashion uses up a lot of resources. Both the dyeing of material and tanning of leather pollute the water – that's something the industry should be aware of," Wong says.

British designer Susie Freeman's "Package Me" used a new material made from the packaging of everything she and her family ate during the Christmas holiday. "It has a visual beauty enhanced by knowing it continues to celebrate that particular Christmas and reminds us how much we discard," Freeman says.

Designer Louda Larrain from the US brought a bird-shaped dress made of discarded umbrellas to the exhibition.

"It is very windy in New York, especially when it rains. So you see dozens of broken umbrellas discarded on the streets. I collect them, remove the fabric, wash it, cut it into strips and use the strips to crochet hats and garments. 'L'Oise de Parapluie,' one dress, I made this way. Transforming garbage into a beautiful object is a big satisfaction," Larrain says.

Recycling was also reflected in UK designer Anthony Bednall's "Upcycling," made from old jeans and shirts. The inspiration came from his research into fashion waste.

According to Futerra, a sustainability communications agency, 1.5 million to 2 million tons of shoes and clothes are scrapped annually: 75 percent of them end up buried or burned, adding to underground waste and carbon emissions in the UK.

"Upcycling" as a concept was first devised by William McDonough and Michael Braugart in their book *Cradle to Cradle*, a study of ecologically intelligent design.

"It seemed to be the perfect solution as reusing unwanted garments can reduce our individual carbon footprint, and the reinventing, remaking and remodeling of those products develops personal creativity and strengthen our relationship with the products that we possess," Bednall says.



Xiao Yingxian's
Reclaimed New Beauty
Photo provided by Xiao Yingxian

any designer who spends too much of his spring in Beijing probably has a few ideas for how people could dress to better protect themselves from the sandstorms.

Austrian designer Sissy Pink prefers durable, biodynamic materials. Beijing faces the same challenges as other metropolises on the road to megalopolis, and its economic growth and personal prosperity teeter back and forth barely in balance with the environment.

"For Beijingers, I would suggest clothes made out of linen, cotton and silk with 'veins' of water, embroidered as sun catchers. Wide sleeves would catch the wind to keep people warm when it's cool and cool when it's warm," Pink says.

"Environmentally-friendly clothes should be made of natural fibers that can be easily classified and naturally broken down to animal or plant food, or into high-quality raw materials for industrial production," says Xiao Yingxian, an instructor at China Academy of Art.

Protective clothes made from organic cotton and cereal fibers and which are sandstorm-proof and humidity-proof would be a hit on the local market, he says.

"The key to making such clothes is to use eco-friendly materials which can reduce the emission of harmful gases and wastes during production and recycling," Chen Jing, one of the exhibitors, says.

Beijingers may also need garments that can work as air purifiers.

"I remember the world-renowned fashion artist Hussein Chalayan made a coat with a yarn hood that automatically covered the head whenever a sandstorm started. Something like that might be ideal for spring in Beijing," Yuan Yan, one of the exhibitors, says.

Lü Yue, the curator, said clothes that save energy are the essence of environmentally-friendly dress. Clothes have to be energy efficient in both production and wear. Her black-and-white vest made of bulbs is called "Yin and Yang, Day and Night," a name meant to suggest the alarming pollution and electricity waste the city now faces.

"For Beijingers, because of the dusty air and the sandstorms, they need clothes made of dust-proof material that can stay clean without frequent washing," Lü says.



Designer Louda Larrain uses material from discarded umbrellas.

In the mood for sports

By Wang Yu

Saying good-bye to Beijing's long, bitter cold winter also means saying hello to a sportier spring lifestyle. The warm outdoors beckon, while the need for a summer body is not too far away.

Running is one of the cheapest, most convenient and most popular forms of exercise; it requires little more than a comfortable pair of shoes. For many ladies, yoga is the workout of choice to keep a trim figure. But nothing beats walking, rather than taking a cab, on days you cannot hit the gym or just do not have the energy for a run.

Below are some of our picks to make your journey to a better body enjoyable, worthwhile – and fashionable.



299 yuan

Lotus designs for yoga

Domestic sportswear brand Li-Ning has created a yoga series for women who do not want to compromise on fashion while working out.

The series, under Li-Ning's Inner Shine line, is characterized by a lotus pattern over purple, yellow, black or grey background. The designers equate the flower with yoga: quiet and elegant.

The bottoms have built-in underwear and an adjustable belt, which can be tied around the shoulders or clipped to a bag as an accessory. The clothes use sheer cotton for greater breathability and comfort.

The shoes offer both stability and flexibility and come in black and silver.

All products are available at Li-Ning stores.

269 yuan



339 yuan

Photos provided by Li-Ning



169 yuan



High fashion meets sports

Just after the New Year, Armani and Reebok announced an alliance that would infuse athletic fashion with haute couture. The new label, EA7, debuted at Milan Fashion Week's Emporio Armani menswear show on January, 16.

"Today, sportswear and active wear have become really important parts of our wardrobes. I wanted to offer my customers the possibility of wearing sports clothes that were stylish and comfortable. My new alliance with Reebok is a natural consequence of this philosophy. As with all my collaborations, I am delighted to be working with experts in their field," Giorgio Armani said.

Uli Becker, president of Reebok, said "the global credentials of

the Emporio Armani and EA7 brands, combined with Reebok's fitness and training heritage, fit together perfectly to provide a compelling new offering in the global sports-style marketplace."

Though we expect some athletes to raise their eyebrows at the new crossover collection, it does offer an alternative to the tired old sporty getup.

Mega Chic, a dress sneaker, exhibits its stylish genes in the textured leather upper and the rubber injected hand-made leather sole. But Reebok's hand is evident in the shock-absorbing DMX Heel Mega technology designed for running on ordinary roads.

Compared with Mega Chic, the Runner 7 looks more traditional with its clean, unsculpted profile. But its retro elements and HexRide outsole still make it a good lifestyle shoe. It is available in misty and starlight grey for men, and white, magenta and grey for women.

EA7's debut collection also includes running apparel for men and women, like PlayDry, a fabric that wicks away perspiration. Meanwhile, chaffing is eliminated with the help of Smooth Fit technology, which limits friction during movement.

Products will be available at Emporio Armani boutiques and select Reebok concept stores in July.



Photos provided by Reebok and Armani

Serious runner's best friend

Runners who are serious about their workout should check out the new Adidas MiCoach activity tracking system.

It consists of a stride sensor, a heart-rate monitor and an online workout manager. To start and charge the device, plug the pacer unit – the system's brains – into your computer. Then download the syncing application from MiCoach's web site: adidas.com/micoach, which will generate a personalized workout plan. The application can update your data after each run.

Next, clip the unit to your belt, attach the stride sensor to your shoe-laces, wrap the heart-rate monitor strap around your torso and wait for the pacer to start up. Plug in the single earphone for some tunes and you're ready to go.

Activating MiCoach takes only a few seconds. You can also plug in your own music device, such as an iPod.

While running, you can use the gadget in one of two modes: free or coaching. In the free mode, the device will simply monitor your activity and save it for later syncing. In the coaching mode, a voice will chime in from time to time, providing your stats or telling you that you're running too fast. There are a variety of voices to choose from.

A fully charged pacer should last up to 10 hours and daily syncing ensures your unit is charged up. The stride sensor's battery is not rechargeable, but replacements are available at Adidas stores.

MiCoach's website provides numerous workout plans, including suggestions for beginners. Here, you can view your workout calendar, track data uploaded from your pacer and get running tips. Adidas said it is currently working on a program that will allow users to share their data.



MiCoach 998 yuan

Photos provided by Adidas

Spring menu and hangouts

By Annie Wei

Eating seasonal food is an important part of traditional health care. For spring, the menu should include fresh bamboo shoots, leeks and Chinese toon.

Sun Simiao, a famous doctor during the Tang Dynasty (618-907), said sweet foods are also suitable for spring since people need energy for increased outdoor activity. But he cautioned against eating too much meat and fat.

Below, we introduce two restaurants where you can have your fill of spring-friendly dishes and a cafe where you can proceed for dessert.



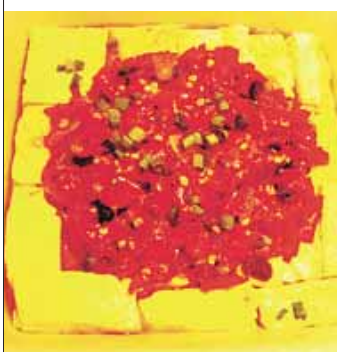
Huixiang beans, 8 yuan



Shepherd's purse and fresh lotus roots, 26 yuan



Pigeon cooked in rice wine, 48 yuan



Steamed two peppers and stinky tofu, 22 yuan
Photos by Yu Tingmei

Sights and flavors south of the Yangtze

The best-known Chinese poems about spring talk about the natural scenery of Jiangnan, a region "south of the Yangtze River" where people enjoy the sight of peach blossoms while dining on plump fish, fresh bamboo shoots and full-bodied yellow wine.

Kongyiji Shangya, near the Workers' Stadium, recreates Jiangnan's food and ambiance for Beijingers – there's a pavilion and bridge over a stream of water inside the restaurant.

The highlight of its spring menu is changjiang sanxian, the Yangtze River's "three fresh" fish: ribbon fish, shad and catfish. An order costs 350 to 668 yuan, depending on the fish you pick.

There are several bamboo-shoot dishes to choose from, including jicai xiansun (46 yuan), shepherd's purse and fresh bamboo shoots; xuancai chao xiansun (42 yuan), fried pickled vegetable and fresh bamboo shoots; and lingjiao chao xiansun (42 yuan), fried water chestnut and fresh bamboo shoots. The bamboo shoots are tender and have a light taste.

Qingtuan (6 yuan) is traditionally eaten on Tomb Sweeping Day, a festival to commemorate the departed and which marks the middle of spring. It fell on Monday this year.

According to custom, to prepare for the festival, people pick green plants like wormwood from the mountains. They clean the plant by immersing it in a boiling solution of salt and water. Afterwards, they mix it with glutinous rice and water filled with bamboo shoots and dried tofu or minced meat. Then it goes into the steamer and comes out as qingtuan.

We recommend shangyan sui ruge (48 yuan), pigeon cooked in rice wine; xucai fenpi chao douban (32 yuan), pickled vegetable, bean paste and fried watercress; conghua xiangyu (36 yuan), chopped green onions with taro; shanghua lusun (50 yuan), asparagus in soup; and huotui xucai doubansu (38 yuan), ham, pickled vegetable and watercress pastry.

Kongyiji's stinky tofu is known for being heavy on flavor and light on smell. The best place to start is with duojiao zheng choudoufu (22 yuan), steamed two peppers and stinky tofu.

We like the restaurant's Jingdiao Huangjiu wine (34 yuan for 250 milliliters). Try it mixed with preserved plum (2 yuan) and sliced ginger (2 yuan).

Kongyiji Shangyan

Where: Inside No. 8, Chaoyang Gongyuan Xi Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: 11 am – 10 pm
Tel: 6508 2228, 6508 7878

Heavenly chocolate cake in a quiet cafe

As the weather gets warmer, coffee shops are going to get more and more crowded. Finding a quiet place with Wi-Fi is not going to be easy, but the chocolate-themed coffee shop near the Swissotel is worth checking out, with its big, cozy sofas, high ceilings and tanks with colorful fish.

Fantasia has been around for a year but is little-known because of its location: at the basement of Regent Land on Workers' Stadium North Road, close to Dongshishitiao subway station. A pity, because it actually offers quality stuff. All its coffee drinks use beans from Illy, such as the American coffee (25 yuan) and cappuccino (30 yuan).

The coffee shop's specialty is dessert, particularly the chocolate-flavored kind using Valrhona chocolate, a French brand popular among chefs and bakers. We love its Fantasia hot chocolate (35 yuan) with melted Valrhona chocolate and served with three lady-finger biscuits.

Also try the flourless chocolate cake (35 yuan), black cherry cheesecake (45 yuan), mango cream (32 yuan) and chocolate pana cotta (65 yuan), which has a bittersweet flavor since it's made with 75 percent dark chocolate.

The best deal for a group is the Fantasia combination (198 yuan), a plate of four different desserts and a big pot of English tea.

Sadly, the shop's fresh juices (28 yuan), milk shakes (28 yuan), teas (18 to 28 yuan) and beers (20 yuan) are a bit more expensive than other cafes'.

Fantasia accepts special orders, but requires a one-day advance notice.

Fantasia

Where: Basement of Regent Land, 66 Gongti Bei Lu, Dongcheng District

Open: 9:30 am – 11 pm

Tel: 6553 0001



Valrhona chocolate, 35 yuan
Photo by Huang Xiao

Best fermented bamboo shoots in town

Nobody loves bamboo-shoot dishes like people from the south, especially the fermented version called suansun.

Suansun is easy to make. Just slice the shoots into the size you want, then soak them in fresh water in a sealed jar. Make sure the water has no trace of oil. Once fermented, the shoots are ideal for cooking with pork, beef or chicken.

We think the best restaurant in town for suansun dishes is Longyuantang, near Guijie. The restaurant specializes in the Zhuang ethnic group's food, which is sour and hot. Zhuang people, the country's largest minority and who chiefly occupy Guangxi Province, apparently never get fat because the sourness neutralizes the oiliness of their dishes.

At Longyuantang, try suansun fried with different kinds of meat, like suansun chao zhudu (28 yuan), crispy pork belly with suansun and hot peppers. There's also suansun and spicy wujiang fish (48 yuan), fish, suansun and tomato in soup.

We also like huadian ziji (28 yuan), young chicken and mushroom cooked in yellow rice wine and zhuangxiang niang tofu (28 yuan), minced pork sandwiched between tofu slices, covered in egg white, deep-fried, and served with sweet and sour sauce.

The deep-fried beef (32 yuan) with peppers and garlic is absolutely mouth-watering, and so is the xiangjing cui niushe (32 yuan), crispy beef tongue with sesame and celery.

For cold dishes, we recommend liangban qiezi (16 yuan), egg-plants with a hint of sourness.

Longyuantang

Where: 6 Xiang'er Hutong, Dongsi Bei Dajie, Dongcheng District

Open: 9 am – 2 pm, 5-10 pm

Tel: 8404 9502



Garlic prawns, 48 yuan

Photo provided by Dianping.com

A self-proclaimed 'farmer' in the music world

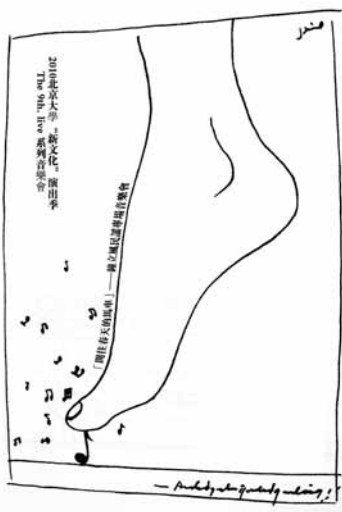


Photo provided by U Studio

By He Jianwei

A musician is like a farmer who has more passion for the land than for his harvest, says Zhong Lifeng, regarded as one of the country's most literary folk musicians.

"Ballads are like crops and the singer like a farmer who carefully cultivates those crops. He sings of endless love to nature, the Earth and humanity," Zhong says.

The musician draws his inspiration from film and literature; his band is named Borges, after the Argentine poet Jorge Luis Borges, and his music label is called Wild Strawberries, after a film by Swedish director Ingmar Bergman.

Born in Zhejiang Province, Zhong moved to Beijing in 1995 where he began writing and performing folk songs. In 2004, he signed with Taihe Rye Music and released his first solo album, *Beside the Road*, two years later. Unfortunately, the masses did not take to his poetic lyrics.

In February 2009, he founded Wild Strawberries and afterwards released his second album, *The Crazy Fruits*, characterized by sentimental songs permeated with pathos. Zhong says the sorrowful themes were not about desperation but

about reminding people of hope and the good old days. At the end of last year, he released his third album, *She Knits A Sweater For Me*, which contains 13 songs created from 1997 to that time.

Zhong wrote "Without You, It Will Make More Forests Sorrowful" in a small hotel in the autumn of 2003 after hearing a middle-aged man reading a paragraph from Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* – a passage about the character's reaction to his mother's letter. Then suddenly, Zhong heard the man howl in grief.

A part of the song goes, "Whether you are a man with a broken heart or like a speechless bird keeping silent, in the endless forest hears the mother's call of tenderness from a distance."

Zhong calls the songs in his latest album private music. "When I sang them, it seemed like I was singing to a friend or the one I love," he says.

Spring Carriage – Zhong Lifeng Folk Concert

Where: Peking University Hall, 5 Yiheyuan Lu, Haidian District
When: 7 pm
Admission: 40 and 50 yuan
Tel: 6275 8452

Friday, April 9

Movie
Nazarin (1959)
The neighbors of Father Nazarin, a priest working in a Mexico City slum,

steal from him and take advantage of his literal interpretation of Christ's teachings. The film won the award for Excellence in the Foreign Film Market at the 1958 Cannes Film Festival.

Where: Instituto Cervantes, 1 Gongti Nan Lu, Chaoyang District
When: 7 pm
Admission: Free (reservation by email necessary)
Email: cultipek@cervantes.org.cn

Exhibition

Alternative Presentation

Cao Meng's oil paintings weigh in on life and death.

Where: Jindian Space, Today Art Museum, Building 4, Pingod Community, 32 Baiziwan Lu, Chaoyang District

Saturday, April 10

Exhibition
The Anniversary Collection

The exhibition presents the winners of the 2009 Hahnemuhle Anniversary Photo Award. Hahnemuhle, founded in 1584, is the oldest papermaker in Germany and is a favorite of local artists.

Where: Time Machine Image Center, One Art Base, Area D, Hegezhuang Village, Cuigezhuang County, Chaoyang District

When: Until April 25, daily, 10 am – 6 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 6431 0281

Nightlife

David Braid Jazz Piano Recital
This Canadian pianist and composer's album *Vivid: The David Braid Sextet Live* won the 2005 Juno Award for Traditional Jazz Album of the Year.

Where: Peking University Hall, 5 Yiheyuan Lu, Haidian District
When: 7 pm
Admission: 40 and 50 yuan
Tel: 6275 8452

When: Until April 15, except weekends, 9 am – 5:30 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 5876 0536

Greyscale

Jin Futai, Ye Linghan and Zhu Hui, artists of the post-'80s generation, describe their experience of living in a trance.

Where: Other Gallery, 798 Art District, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until April 20, daily except Monday, 10 am – 6 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 6431 9684

Nightlife

Tizzy Bac Tour 2010

No guitars allowed for this Taiwanese band, only keyboards.

Where: Mao Livehouse, 111 Gulou Dong Dajie, Dongcheng District
When: 8 pm
Admission: 150 yuan advance purchase, 200 yuan at the door
Tel: 6586 0065 ext. 8213

Sunday, April 11

Exhibition
The Anniversary Collection

The exhibition presents the winners of the 2009 Hahnemuhle Anniversary Photo Award. Hahnemuhle, founded in 1584, is the oldest papermaker in Germany and is a favorite of local artists.

Where: Time Machine Image Center, One Art Base, Area D, Hegezhuang Village, Cuigezhuang County, Chaoyang District

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Where: Peking University Hall, 5 Yiheyuan Lu, Haidian District
When: 7 pm
Admission: 40 and 50 yuan
Tel: 6275 8452

Movie



Le Petit Nicolas (Little Nicolas, 2009)

To mark the 50th anniversary of the French children's book, the movie recreates the prim, decorous world of suburban France in the postwar years portrayed in the book.

Where: Broadway Cinematheque, 2/F Building 4, North section of the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), 1 Xiangheyuan Lu, Dongcheng District
When: 3 pm
Admission: 40 yuan, 30 yuan for students
Tel: 8438 8258 ext. 8008

Sunday, April 11

Nightlife

Eleventyseven

The band from South Carolina, US, release their latest album, *Adventures in Evil*, which talk about robot squirrels, a dog named Grover Cleveland and relationship issues.

Where: Yugongyishan, 3-2 Zhangzizhong Lu, Dongcheng District

When: 9 pm
Admission: 80 yuan advance purchase, 100 yuan at the door
Tel: 6404 2711



Lamb of God

Since the release of its hit album *Ashes of the Wake* in 2004, the band has been considered a leader in new wave American heavy metal.

Where: Star Live, 3/F Tango, 79 Heping Xi Jie, Dongcheng District

When: 9 pm
Admission: 290-490 yuan advance purchase, 350-550 yuan at the door, 790 yuan for VIP
Tel: 6402 5080

Movie

27 Missing Kisses (2000) and The Phantom of the Opera (1998)

The first is a Georgian film, telling the adventures of teenager Sybilla, who falls in love with a middle-aged father. The latter is an Italian horror film adapted from Gaston Leroux's famous novel.

Where: China Film Archive, 3 Wenhuiyuan Lu, Xiaoxitian,

Haidian District

When: 6:30 pm
Admission: 30 yuan for two
Tel: 8229 6153

Exhibition

108 Chinese Artists

Beijing-based French photographer Alexis Mestre presents portraits of 108 Chinese artists.

Where: French Cultural Center, 1/F, Guangcai International Mansion, 18 Gongti Xi Lu, Chaoyang District
When: Until April 30, daily, 10 am – 6:30 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 6553 2627

Upcoming

Drama Light

The piece explores the loss of innocence – after Michael Jackson's death – of the generation who grew up listening to his music.

Where: Peking University Hall, 5 Yiheyuan Lu, Haidian District
When: 7 pm
Admission: 40, 50 and 70 yuan
Tel: 6275 8452

Stage in May

Concert

Charles Dutoit and the Philadelphia Orchestra

Where: Concert Hall of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: May 4-5, 7:30 pm
Admission: 280-1,680 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

Martin Stadtfeld and Festival Strings Lucerne

Where: Concert Hall of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: May 14, 7:30 pm
Admission: 80-400 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

Secret Garden Beijing Tour 2010

Where: Beijing Exhibition Theater, 135 Xizhimen Wai Dajie, Xicheng District
When: May 29-30, 7:30 pm
Admission: 180-1,580 yuan
Tel: 6590 3377

Dance

Don Quixote by the Bolshoi Theater

Where: Opera House of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: May 3-5, 7:30 pm
Admission: 280-1,280 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

Akram Khan's Modern Dance Bahok

Where: Mei Lanfang Grand Theater, 32 Ping'anli Xi Dajie, Xicheng District
When: May 14-15, 7:30 pm
Admission: 80-580 yuan
Tel: 5833 1210

Drama

Sweet, Sweet Love

Where: Poly Theater, 14 Dongzhimen Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District
When: May 19-23, 7:30 pm
Admission: 180-680 yuan
Tel: 6551 8058

The Life Attitude of Two Dogs

Where: Oriental Pioneer Theater, 8-2 Dongdan Santiao Wangfujing, Dongcheng District
When: May 17 – June 13, 7:30 pm
Admission: 100 and 180 yuan
Tel: 6275 8452

(By He Jianwei)

Natural ways to boost your sperm count

By Li Zhixin

Cola has long been suspected to be a sperm killer since its sister plant product cocaine is known to reduce the quantity and quality of sperm.

A new Danish study seems to confirm those suspicions: men who drink almost 1 liter or more of cola every day could be damaging their sperm counts.

Is cola bad for sperm?

The sperm counts of men who drank cola daily were, on average, 30 percent lower than those of men who didn't drink cola. While most of the sperm counts were still considered normal by the World Health Organization, men with fewer sperm are often infertile.

The link is unlikely to be due to caffeine, researchers say, because coffee did not have the same effect despite its higher caffeine content. Other ingredients in the beverage or an unhealthy lifestyle could be the cause, they said.

"It's important to note that the men who drank a lot of cola were also different in many other ways," said Tina Kold Jensen, a doctor at Rigshospitalet in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Jensen, who led the study, said few studies examined caffeine's impact on reproductive health in men. Study participants have generally been a very select group, such as infertile men, and the results have been conflicting.

Because Danish youth have been increasing their consumption of colas and other caffeine-containing soft drinks over the last decades, researchers decided to study how it might affect reproductive health.

More than 2,500 young men were included in the study. Those who did not drink cola had better sperm quality — averaging 50 million sperm per milliliter of semen — and tended to have a healthier lifestyle.

By contrast, the 93 men who drank more than 1 liter of cola a day had only 35 million sperm per milliliter. They also ate more fast food and fewer fruits and vegetables.

Compared to caffeine from other sources, such as coffee and tea, the decrease in sperm quality was much less pronounced, researchers reported in the *American Journal of Epidemiology*.

Common causes of low counts

"It is still not clear if the cola or the unhealthy lifestyle, or both, are to blame. However, the drink itself likely was not the most important factor," Zhang Jiamei, a doctor at Beijing Tianlun Fertility Hospital, said.

"Nearly any major physical or mental stress which may interfere with gonadotropin-releasing hormones can temporarily reduce sperm count," Zhang said.

Some common conditions that temporarily lower sperm count include:

1. Testicular heat

Raised testicular temperature due to fevers, saunas or hot tubs may temporarily lower one's sperm count. Working regularly in a hot environment may impair fertility.

2. Bicycling

Bicycling has been linked to impotence in men and could affect sperm count. "Pressure from the bike seat may damage blood vessels and nerves that are responsible for erections," he said. "Mountain biking, which involves riding off-road, exposes the perineum (the region between the scrotum and the anus) to extreme shocks and vibrations and increases the risk of injury to the scrotum."

3. Excessive meat intake

A recent Spanish study showed that men who ate processed meats and full-fat dairy may have

poorer sperm quality than those who eat more fruit, vegetables and low-fat dairy.

4. Smoking and alcohol

Smoking impairs sperm count, sperm motility, reduces sperm life span and may cause genetic changes that affect the offspring. Additionally, smokers have lower sex drives and less frequent sex, he said.

Alcohol and heavy marijuana use can reduce the number and quality of sperm by as much as 50 percent. They can also decrease sperm count and increase the production of abnormal sperm. "Sperm actually have receptors for certain compounds in marijuana that resemble natural substances and which may impair the sperm's ability to swim and may inhibit their ability to penetrate the egg," he said.

5. Nutrient deficiencies

Deficiencies in certain nutrients, such as vitamin C, selenium, zinc and folate, may be risk factors for low sperm counts.

6. Exposure to heavy metals

Chronic exposure to heavy metals such as lead, cadmium or arsenic may affect sperm production and most often causes reduced production in otherwise healthy males. Trace amounts of these metals in semen seem to inhibit the function of enzymes contained in the acrosome, the membrane that covers the head of the sperm.



CFP Photo

Natural ways to improve fertility

Having a baby can be one of the most exciting times in a couple's life, but if the husband has low sperm viability, it may be difficult for the wife to get pregnant.

Medications and fertility treatments can be off-putting and expensive. "If you and your partner are struggling with fertility issues, you can try natural ways to improve your fertility," Zhang said.

1. Eat right

A balanced diet plays an important role in men's fertility. It helps to regulate hormones and nourish men's reproductive systems. A good diet also helps you to maintain a healthy weight, which can greatly impact fertility.

"It is important to include zinc, selenium, vitamins C, D and E and calcium in your diet. These vitamins and minerals can prevent sperm defects and boost sperm motility," he said.

2. Exercise

Some studies have found an association between obesity in men and a low sperm count. Moderate exercise can be a good natural fertility treatment. When combined with a balanced and nutritious diet, exercise can help men to maintain a healthy body weight. It helps burn off excess body fat, allowing hormone levels to return to normal.

"It is best not to overdo exercise — over-exercise can impair fertility. Try low-impact aerobic workouts like walking, swimming and cycling," he said.

3. Herbs

Take herbs such as ginseng and ginger. These are nontoxic herbs which have been used in traditional Chinese medicine to improve male fertility.

Panax or Asian ginseng has been shown to increase testosterone and sperm count. Adding ginseng to a man's daily diet could boost sperm production and motility.

Ginger and pine bark are also herbal therapies for increasing sperm motility. Ginger works to increase fertility by stimulating the pituitary gland, responsible for producing sex hormones like estrogen, progesterone and testosterone. Pine bark may also improve fertility by balancing sex hormones.

Maca, known as Peruvian Viagra and Peruvian ginseng, is also a herbal sex-enhancing remedy passed down from the Incas long ago. The plant is said to help with energy, stamina and libido.

Wild for strawberries

By Charles Zhu

So close and yet so far are the strawberry farms among the gray-brick farmhouses at the foot of the Yanshan mountain range, Beijing's "back garden" where 13 Ming emperors are buried.

Legend says the water here is "special" since it runs through the dragon's – the emperor's – veins. As if nature is eager to prove this myth, the Xiaotangshan area is teeming rich with geothermal springs that promote the growth of strawberries.

Locals believe the glittery red strawberries bring happiness and call them "the happy fruit." Everyone can use a bit more happiness, so why not welcome spring with a weekend of picking berries in Xiaotangshan?



Photo by Mikey



CFP Photo



Tianyi Strawberry Farm grows various fruits that ripen this season.

Photo provided by Tianyi Strawberry Farm

Land of strawberry mania

If you drive through the zigzagging dirt roads of Changping on an early spring weekend, you will see by the roadside farmers with broad smiles who are eager to sell their bright red produce. In the past, growing strawberries was a rarity among people in the dry north.

Beijing's strawberry mania began at Tianyi Strawberry Farm, a demonstration farm that cultivates the fruit in cooperation with agro-scientists from the Beijing Academy of Agriculture and Forestry. The farm, staffed by 56, is one of the capital's major strawberry growers: it has 800 greenhouses on 330 hectares of land and sells 10 million runners annually to farmers throughout the country.

Tianyi also grows Ukrainian cherries, peaches and apricots, which ripen this season.

Farm visitors are taken on a tour of a greenhouse where strawberries are grown on raised platforms. Strawberries are an easy plant to grow almost anywhere in the world, says Liu Jia, manager of the sales department. But he adds that they're best grown in the temperate zone.

Liu proudly says the farm's strawberries are organic: the farmers do not use any fertilizers or pesticides. Once the fruits are harvested, they are transported to the city's supermarkets within the hour, he says.

Strawberries like sun and sandy soil. They are a sturdy plant, but it is important they get enough water when they begin bearing fruit. To make them bigger, sweeter and more fragrant, Tianyi waters the plant using wood vinegar, which contains some 280 varieties of organic matter, Liu says.

The farm receives on average 30,000 tourists a year who come away with 75 tons of berries. It earns 1.8 million yuan a year and sponsored the country's first strawberry festival in 2007. An international strawberry festival is expected in 2012.

Continued on page 21...



... continued from page 20

Going picking

Strawberries are harvested between December and May, which makes now a favorable time to go picking.

Tianyi grows the *hongyan* variety, a Japanese species that is fragrant, tender and sweet and has a high, firm and sturdy stalk. *Hongyan*, which means "beauty," produces fruit that weighs 24 to 28 grams.

The farm also cultivates a species from the US that is locally called "tongchi No. 1." Its fruit averages 35 to 45 grams, with the biggest at 100 grams. Its attractively waxy fruit is on the sour side, ideal for those who wish to restrict their sugar intake.

Another species is the *tianxiang*, or "heavenly fragrance," a local variety that has an orangey color, a strong aroma and weighs 29.8 to 58 grams.

One cup, or 144 grams, of strawberries contains approximately 45 calories and is an excellent source of vitamin C and flavonoids.

My family and I visited Tianyi farm one weekend to take a tour and go picking. We were among a group of 30 and were given baskets for our choice picks. We alternated between picking the berries and devouring the juicy fruit. Each kilogram of strawberries cost 120 yuan – worth every cent for the flavor and the fun – but the price can range from 60 to 240 yuan per kilo, depending on the variety picked.

Visitors who wish to bring home more berries can head to the farm's supermarket. The fruit can be dried or eaten fresh with cereal, yogurt or milk and added to jello.

The supermarket also sells strawberry jams and juices. Soon, it hopes to offer strawberry ice cream and milkshakes to give tourists more food choices, says Liu.

Tianyi delivers bulk purchases, which can be ordered on the phone. It also sells potted strawberries, cherries and peaches, which make good home decorations. My family and I brought home two pots of flowering strawberries to commemorate our spring outing.



Going strawberry picking with your family is a fun weekend activity.

Photo provided by
Tianyi Strawberry Farm



Photos by Mikey

Tianyi Strawberry Farm

Getting there: Go north on Litang Road, cross Daliushu, then continue heading north for 2 kilometers until you reach the first traffic light at which you turn northwest. Or, take the Beijing-Chengde expressway, make an exit at Beiqijia, take Litang Road and follow the rest of the directions above.

Tel: 6172 1718 ext.22 or 13426089606

Note: Those who wish to stay overnight in the countryside can pick from several hotels. Here are a few, listed in order of proximity to the farm: Fulaigong Hot Spring Villas (2.96 kilometers), Longyue International Business Hotel (14.84), Endemin Hotel (15.01), Beinong Hotel (15.60), Dushi Huayu Business Inn (16.33), Youshan Meidi Country Club (16.67) and Olympic Baodi Hotel (17.16).



Other destinations

Chawu Strawberry Farm

The biggest strawberry farm in Huairou District, growing mainly Japanese species.

Getting there: Go on the Beijing-Chengde expressway and take Kuan'gou exit to Dongchawu. Alternatively, you can take Bus 942 from Dongzhimen to Dongchawu stop.

Tel: 8968 6526

Yuxiang Picking Farm

It has 40 strawberry greenhouses growing both domestic and overseas varieties.

Getting there: From West Third Ring Road, take Sihaiqiao exit toward Hanhe Road, passing Fragrant Hills. On Hanhe, turn right and continue for another 1.5 kilometers. The farm is located across from the Wan'an Cemetery.

Tel: 6259 0135

Dining



One East business lunch

Visit One East this month for an unforgettable modern American lunch. Pay 100 yuan for a two-course set menu featuring the best American Cuisine in Beijing. Add 30 yuan for a third course.

Where: One East, Hilton Beijing, 1 Dongfang Lu, Chaoyang District

When: noon - 2:30 pm, Monday - Friday

Cost: 100 - 130 yuan per person (15 percent service fee)

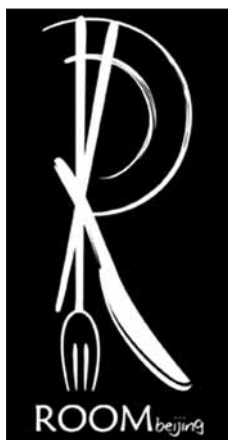
Tel: 5865 5030



Tuscany

The award-winning Daccapo Italian Restaurant is hosting a Tuscany Food and Wine Festival this May. Tuscan cuisine is known for tasty dishes made with natural ingredients that turn even the simplest dishes into delicacies. The fine ingredients are an Italian tradition, and their smell and taste are as unforgettable as the Tuscany landscape. Don't miss the fabulous specials prepared by Michelin-rated chef Mario Cittadini.

Where: Daccapo Italian Restaurant, Regent Hotel, 99 Jinbao Jie, Dongcheng District
Tel: 8522 1789



ROOMbeijing

ROOMbeijing, a restaurant, bar and lounge by Brian McKenna, opens this month. Located in the glamorous Yintai Center in the heart of the central business district, ROOMbeijing redefines eating out. It explores new ways to balance East and West through McKenna's culinary skills. Dishes on the menu include a roast rack of lamb with

a mini "Irish stew" and sweet breads; Brian McKenna's 42-ingredient salad, topped with a slowly cooked egg; sweet and sour pig cheeks with rice noodles; and, for something sweet, the ROOM Coffee with fill-your-own-doughnuts and hard-boiled lemongrass panna cotta with mango cream and French toast.



Friday lobster night

China World Hotel has countless reasons you should be thankful that it's Friday. Boston Lobsters and Alaskan King Crabs highlight a buffet extravaganza with 10 kinds of seafood. Dive headfirst into its fresh salads, sashimi and sushi, endless noodles and dumplings and mouthwatering desserts. Enjoy free soft drinks, coffee, tea and Australian chardonnay.

Where: Scene a Cafe, China World Hotel, 1 Jianguomen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang District

When: Every Friday, 6-10 pm

Tel: 6505 2266 ext. 35



Nola Cafe

Come in any day of the work week and receive 20 percent off all tea and desserts. Great for meetings over tea or an after-work snack. Choose from pu'er, jasmine, dragon well, chrysanthemum and Earl Grey loose leaf teas. Desserts include strawberry cheesecake, banana foster shortcake, cafe au lait pots de creme, molten chocolate tart, fresh cookies and pineapple buckle.

Where: Nola Cafe, 11 Xiushui Nan Jie, Jianguomen Wai, Chaoyang District

Tel: 8563 6215

Saturday evening country fine dining

The Schoolhouse serves country dinners each Saturday evening. Crisp linens, singing wine glasses, fresh flowers, and dancing candlelight complement Chef Randhir's fusion menu based on fresh and seasonal ingredients.

Where: The Schoolhouse, 12 Mutianyu Village, Huairou District

When: 6 pm

Tel: 6162 6506

Cantonese ZeZe Clay Pot

Executive Chef Qiuming Tian, of The Great Wall Sheraton Hotel Beijing, has an array of delicious ZeZe clay pots this May. ZeZe clay pots are unique to Cantonese cooking: the pots retain heat while simmering to cook fresh-tasting foods and sauces. Try a ZeZe cuttlefish clay pot with shallots and ginger or a tender chicken clay pot with garlic and chives.

Where: The 21st Floor Restaurant, The Great Wall Sheraton Hotel Beijing, 10 Dongsanhuan Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

Tel: 6590 5566 ext. 2295

Aviation



Singapore Airlines starts service to Munich

Singapore Airlines launched its inaugural flight to Munich last week. Munich is Singapore Airlines' second destination in Germany after Frankfurt, which is served with two daily flights, one of which carries on to New York. The addition of Munich to Singapore Airlines' network gives customers more options for visiting the outstanding city and its surrounding region.

For more details, visit singaporeair.com.

Hotel

Hyatt guests earn, redeem rewards with Gold Passport

Hyatt Gold Passport has launched its The Big Welcome Back promotion, which gives guests a choice of earning one free night or 5,000 Hyatt Gold Passport bonus points for every two stays at the Grand Hyatt Beijing or any participating Hyatt through June 30. Free night awards can be enjoyed without blackout dates between April 1 and August 31; bonus points can be redeemed at any time for free nights, upgrades or airline miles. For full details, terms and conditions, or to register your earning preference, visit Beijing.grand.hyatt.com or goldpassport.com.

China Hotel Starlight Awards

The Beijing Renaissance Capital Hotel was recently awarded as one of the Top 10 City-Nova Hotels of China by the Committee of China Hotel Starlight Awards. The award is presented annually to new hotels.

Spa

Summer Essentials

It's time for summer! Pamper yourself with an aromasoul ritual scrub and aromatic massage. Enjoy a rejuvenating body scrub with nourishing creams and a relaxing, tension-relieving aromatic massage.

Where: Hilton Beijing Wangfujing, 8 Wangfujing Dong Street, Dongcheng District

When: May 1 - July 31

Cost: Special rate of 680 yuan (originally 1,060 yuan; 15 percent service fee)

Tel: 5812 8888 ext. 8560

(By Sun Feng)

Chinglish story

This column focuses on Chinglish mistakes in our daily life. If you have any experiences to share, send them to Wang Yu at wangyu2008@ynet.com.

Talking with the Cockneys



By Wang Yu

I went to London three years ago for winter vacation. It was my first trip overseas and I was a bit nervous about testing my English in the language's native land.

I lived in Guildford, a prosperous town in Surrey county, in the southeast. Compared with big cities like London and Manchester, it was quiet, safe, the people were nice, and most of all – their accent was easy to understand.

Some days I visited London. The city was teeming with tourists out to discover the old city, the new London and the one they've created in their minds. For me, the most unforgettable experience was hanging around Demark Street, visiting the guitar shops. Then I headed to Camden to check out the second-hand record stores.

I was pretty pleased with my English in Guildford, but the accent of Londoners totally crushed my confidence. In a Virgin record store on the West End, I asked a sales person if they had a poster of the band Oasis. The man was very helpful, telling me which shops I should visit and how to get there. He spoke rapidly, with an accent I could hardly understand. I said thanks and turned to my Lonely Planet guidebook for help.

I met more people on the East End who talked in the same way and it took

almost two weeks for me to get used to their accent.

"You must have talked with the Cockneys," Simon, a British friend who lives in Beijing, said when I told him about my trip weeks later. He spoke in exactly the same way.

"People in London have different accents and the Cockneys' is characteristic," he said. "You've seen Guy Ritchie's *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* and *Snatch* right? The gangsters in *RocknRolla* are also typical Cockneys."

"Give me a Cockney slang. I need to learn," I said.

"Good attitude ... have a butchers!" Simon held his new Ricoh camera in front of me.

"Are you planning to kill some pigs with its lens?" I said.

"Haha, that's funny. The phrase means to have a look, which originates from the similar-sounding 'butcher's hook.' You know, the S-shaped hook used by butchers to hang up meat. Just take a look on what's on the hook. The key is the rhyme," he said.

"That's cool. Anything else?"

"Don't ask me, just use your loaf, mate."

"Hmm ... it's 'use your head'?"

"Yes, it comes from 'loaf of bread.' How do you know what it means?"

"Because my mobile phone can connect to the Internet."

"But the Web pages can't teach you how to talk like that," he said.

Good point. Still, there was a lot of interesting information to be found online.

Rhyming slang, a form of slang in spoken and written English in which a word is replaced by a rhyming word, is nowadays associated with Cockney speech. By the mid-20th century, many rhyming slang expressions used the names of contemporary personalities, especially actors and performers. The actor Gregory Peck meant "neck" and "cheque"; the Irish singer Ruby Murray meant "curry"; "whickers" meant "knickers," from "Alan Whicker," a TV personality.

In the late 20th century there were "Tony Blairs," after the former British prime minister, to mean "flares" or pants with a wide bottom; "Britney Spears" meaning "beers" as in "Let's get a round of Britneys." It also allowed many traditional expressions to come into common use, like the example Simon gave.

One of my biggest lessons from the trip was that there is life after death: the chance to improve even after your confidence in your English-speaking ability is shattered.

Blacklist

This is a column of words or phrases commonly misused by Chinese speakers. If you're planning to be an English teacher, reporter or employee of a multinational company, then watch out for this page each week.

1. Elite

Professor Zhu Shida (ZS): This originally French word appears in familiar phrases like the scientific elite, the elite of society and the elite of the army. Does elite take a singular or plural form when it is a noun? The answer is: both. One example in which "elite" may be regarded as a category is "a privileged elite." You may say: Only the elite were on hand at the reception. However, the word itself may take a plural form, for instance, The rural elites appealed to the court on behalf of the defendant. In this case, "elite" itself is turned into a plural noun.

Native speaker Steven Sander

(SS): There isn't much else to say about this topic, but I would add that "elite" as a noun can also be a generic term for any typewriter that punches 12 characters per linear inch. By contrast, pica typewriters punch 10 letters. I am unsure where the term originated. It could be borrowed from the name of early models in IBM's Selectric series, in which case it would be a trademarked name that fell into common use much like "thermos."

2. Airlines and Airways

ZS: When "airlines" means a company owning and operating an air transport system, for instance, the American Airlines, it takes the singular form though it looks like a plural noun. Here are some examples: Alaska Airways has decided to expand its business by adding two flight routes. British Airways provides very comfortable service. Continental Airlines, the biggest US carrier, says that it will cut its capacity by 40 percent. When "airlines" is not capitalized, it means a group of aviation companies. It takes a plural form, for instance, Airlines the world over found it pretty hard to make money as the number of passengers drastically dropped during the flu epidemic period.

SS: These guidelines apply to all plural proper nouns. For a recent example, see "Olympics."

3. The last thing

ZS: Chinese people may feel very uncomfortable using this phrase, so many would rather say: I don't want to go there. They will find it very uncomfortable to say: The last thing I want to do is to go there. However, as uncomfortable as it is, we still need to learn this kind of forceful expression. I have an example from an English newspaper: The last thing needed by an industry that was already spiraling toward a \$4.7 billion loss this year was another health scare like the SARS virus or the avian flu outbreaks.

SS: While forceful, these three words have been combined too often. These clichés are a convenient crutch for lazy writers, but any editor worth his salt should view them with a wary eye. It may be idiomatic, but readers will gloss over these repeated, familiar patterns. Grab their attention by creating something original.

Chinglish on the way

This column aims to identify Chinglish in public areas. If you see any Chinglish signs, please send a picture of it to wangyu2008@ynet.com together with your name and address.

F--k the fruit area

By Tiffany Tan

Before you start thinking this is some sort of kinky sex club – or a place with an extreme loathing for fruit – let's set the record straight. It's only the dried fruit section of a supermarket.

How oh how did the sign get into this mess? The first character, *gan*, can mean "to do (any action)" or it can mean "dry" as an adjective and adverb. Pitifully, *gan* is also a synonym for sexual intercourse, which, as you can imagine, gets it into a lot of interesting situations.



Eveline Chao discusses this in her book *Niubi!: The Real Chinese You Were Never Taught in School*. *Gan* is "closer in strength to 'shit,' but most dictionaries translate it as 'f--k,' ... The character

gan also means 'dry,' which has made for more than a few comical mistranslations on Chinese restaurant menus and supermarket signs. Now you'll know what happened next time you come across 'slicked f--ck tofu' on a Chinese menu," Chao says.

She says the character is also "used a lot in fighting contexts because it can also mean 'to kill.'"

Now, if someone would just please fix the supermarket sign before the banana, watermelon and pineapple lovers start sniffing around.

Crazy Heart (2009)

Movie of the week

When a performance transcends a mediocre plot, you get a memorable role flanked by a forgettable movie. Such is the case of Jeff Bridges as Bad Blake, the sodden wreck of a country singer scraping a living by playing at bars and bowling alleys in *Crazy Heart*.

And then, Bridges won the Oscar.

The movie is adapted from the novel by Thomas Cobb. Maggie Gyllenhaal plays Jean Craddock, a bruised, kindhearted and devoted mother to a 4-year-old. Director Scott Cooper gives a nice debut. The movie is quiet and slow, but it works. It's a beautiful-written song about life thrust into a two-hour sympathy riot.

Synopsis

Fifty-seven year old Otis Blake – better known by his stage name Bad Blake – is a minor legend as a country and western singer. Blake is a chubby, chain-smoking alcoholic. His self-destructive behavior has left behind several failed marriages and a grown son, last seen at age 4, whose whereabouts Blake does not know.

While performing in Santa Fe, Blake meets Jean, a journalist who wants to do a piece on him for her newspaper. Despite the differences in their ages, Jean and Blake begin a relationship. Blake's professional career takes a turn when he reconnects with a more famous former touring partner named Tommy Sweet, who wants Bad to write some songs for him.

But this promising professional and personal future for Blake may be jeopardized by his long-standing self-destructive lifestyle.



Scene 1

(In the motel room, Blake talks with his manager Jack on the phone about his career.)

Jack Greene (G): Hey, Bad, this is Jack. Listen, I didn't wanna tell you this till you came off this swing (1), but the label cut "So Sweet, So Bad."

Bad Blake (B): Huh? Why, that f---ker's still selling.

G: Well, it was slowing down a lot. You know what? Chains don't want it anymore. Plus Tommy Sweet's got nine albums out there now.

B: What about his new album? I'm gonna get off the road here in a couple weeks. I can get right to it.

G: Tommy wants to know if you got any new material.

B: New material. You know I don't have any new material. Nothing wrong with the old stuff.

G: Tommy thinks he's leaning too heavy on the old stuff. He doesn't want people to think he's riding the **gravy train** (2).

B: That son of a bitch. He has a lifetime pass on the gravy train.

G: Hey, Bad, who's asking who for a record here?

B: Jack, you jerk-off. You get your ass out here to Clovis-goddamn-New Mexico, you play in the piano bar of some bowling alley, get up the next morning at 5 am and drive 300 miles with hemorrhoids so bad it feels like you got a nest of fire ants up your ass, then you tell me about the gravy train.

You and Mr. World Famous Tommy Sweet, both of you try that sometime.

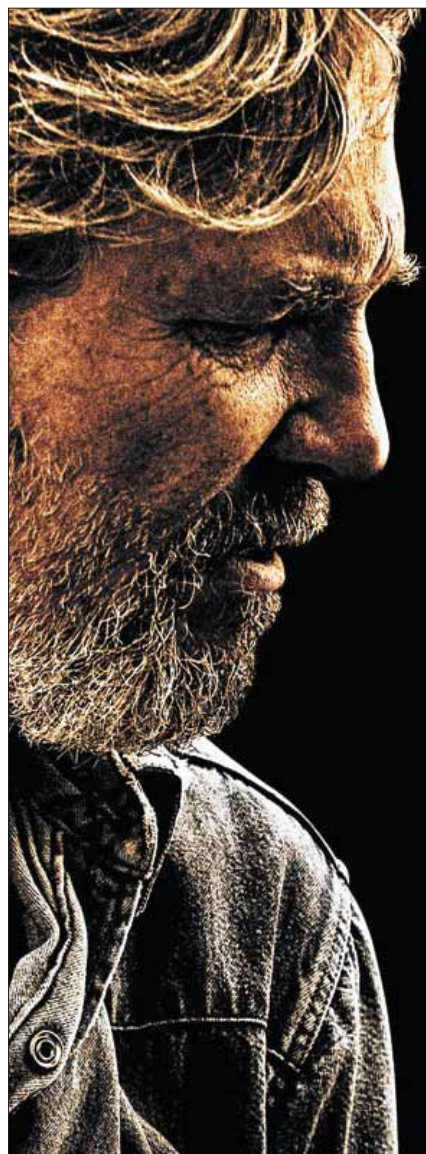
G: Why don't you sit down and write some songs, huh?

B: Keep talkin'. Keep talkin'.

B: Hey, hey, hey. Listen to me. I'm 57 years old. I'm broke. I got \$10 in my pocket.

G: I sent you money when you were still in Texas. So spend it wisely, my friend.

B: Yeah. Good-bye.



B: Tommy, oh, yeah. He tries covering it up. I taught him country, you know? He won't admit it. He's gotta compete with what's coming out of Nashville today. But, yeah, he's real country.

J: How'd you meet him?

B: I don't wanna talk about Tommy.

J: All right. What do you wanna talk about?

B: I wanna talk about how bad you make this room look. I never noticed what a dump it was until you came in here. I haven't seen somebody blush in I don't know how long.

J: Well, I can't help it. My capillaries are close to the skin.

B: Where you from anyway?

J: I'm from Enid, Oklahoma.

B: Of course you are. What's the most important thing about you, Oklahoma?

J: I've got a son Buddy. He's four. He's at his babysitter. I'd better go get him.

(Blake tries to kiss Jean but she refuses.)

J: Thank you for talking to me.

B: Did you get what you need?

J: Could always use more.

Scene 3

(After a car accident, Blake stays in Jean's home. He is singing a new song while playing his guitar.)

B: Your heart's on the loose. You roll them sevens with nothing to lose. This ain't no place for the weary kind. You know that song? Hmm?

J: Can't remember who did it.

B: That's the way it is with good ones. You're sure you've heard them before.

J: You wrote that?

B: Yes, ma'am, just now.

J: This is so unfair.

B: What?

J: Some people give 10 years of their life to be able to do something like that, and it just **pours out of** (5) you.

B: You mad at me? You want me to go to a motel?

J: No. Well, you're writing a song on my bed.

B: So?

J: So ... every time I lie down, I'm gonna hear that beautiful goddamn song and ... and you're gonna be out there ... running around, not even remembering this day ... that I can't even forget.

B: If I could walk, I'd come to you. Come here. Listen to me. When I was at the hospital, I thought about who to call. Who really gives a damn about me? And then, I thought about who I wanted to see.

Vocabulary

- 1. swing:** here it refers to tour
- 2. gravy train:** lucrative endeavor, generally with unearned benefits
- 3. get away with:** escape without being guilty
- 4. turn someone's back on:** to stop being involved in something
- 5. pour out of:** to stream out of

(By Wang Yu)